



Carnival 2026

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FULL-FLEDGED CELEBRATION

The 55th edition of St. Maarten's Carnival is shaping up to be a major success. Judging by the interest shown so far, revellers – both local and coming from abroad – can't wait for the festivities to start in earnest.

Organisers, participants, spectators and all others involved are no doubt ready to make this a memorable edition worthy of the Dutch side's biggest cultural event. As usual, people are encouraged to enjoy themselves and blow off some steam, but do take care and always be considerate of others.

Let the bacchanal season start!



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GRAND CARNIVAL PARADE: The ultimate expression of culture

The Grand Carnival Parade remains the crown jewel of St. Maarten's Carnival, and for its 55th anniversary, the spectacle carries even greater meaning.

According to St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) representative Michael Granger, the parade is far more than a visual display – it is the ultimate embodiment of the island's culture and identity.

"The Grand Carnival Parade is the biggest public expression of what St. Maarten Carnival means. It is where music, costume, movement, culture, creativity, and community all come together on the road in one spectacle."

This year, that spectacle takes on added significance. "For the 55th anniversary, it carries even more weight because it is not just another parade, it is a celebration of how Carnival has survived, evolved, and remained one of the island's strongest cultural traditions over more than five decades."

One of this year's major highlights is the introduction of a second-day experience. "One of the major additions for Carnival 2026 is the introduction of a brand new lighted second-day Grand Parade, which



makes this anniversary year different from the standard format." This addition reflects the SCDF's commitment to expanding and enhancing the Carnival experience.

Organising a parade of this magnitude requires months of preparation and coordination. "A parade of this size takes months of planning. It involves troupe design and costume production, truck and trailer inspections, band coordination, security planning, traffic management, emergency response readiness, route coordination, vendor management, and constant communication between the SCDF, police, ambulance, and other stakeholders." Granger emphasized that preparations began long before April, highlighting the extensive effort behind the scenes.

Lessons from past years have played a crucial role in shaping this year's approach. "One clear lesson is that crowd enjoyment must always be matched by structure and safety."

This focus is reflected in stricter inspections, improved coordination, and clearer rules. At the same time, preserving cultural identity remains a priority. "Another lesson is the importance of protecting the cultural identity of St.

officially registered, with the possibility of additional participants arriving later. While the number of ac-

The route remains unchanged, maintaining a sense of tradition. "There has been no change for

Safety continues to be a central focus. "Safety starts before parade day. Participating vehicles and trailers are subject to inspections," with strict adherence to rules regarding alcohol use, weapons, and behaviour. Coordination with law enforcement and emergency services is extensive. "SCDF works in coordination with KPSM and other emergency and public safety stakeholders," with a security team of over 30 accompanying the parade.

Granger said that smooth execution depends on preparation – "by planning early, locking in registrations, coordinating with stakeholders, and tightening expectations well ahead of the event. Smooth execution comes from preparation, not improvisation." This proactive approach ensures that both participants and spectators can enjoy the event safely.

Crowd control and emergency readiness are also carefully managed. "Crowd control and emergency readiness depend on police deployment, route control and securing with barricades and other measures," along with consistent public messaging about safety.

Attendance is expected to be strong, with the parade traditionally drawing around 20,000 spectators. "With the influx of people to the country, expect that to increase," Granger noted.

For visitors, simple guidelines can make a big difference. "Visitors should come early, stay hydrated, follow instructions from police and SCDF officials, and use good judgment throughout the day." Planning transportation and being mindful of road closures are also key to a smooth experience.

As troupes prepare to take the road with elaborate costumes and vibrant displays, the Grand Carnival Parade promises to once again deliver a powerful celebration of culture. In this milestone year, it stands not only as a highlight of the Carnival calendar, but also as a testament to the resilience and evolution of one of St. Maarten's most cherished traditions.



Maarten Carnival itself, which is why SCDF has kept its requirement that each troupe lead with a cultural section depicting St. Maarten's heritage."

This year, 17 troupes have

companying bands is extensive, Granger noted, "Too numerous to mention: Some troupes have a band and a DJ on the road," ensuring a dynamic and vibrant musical atmosphere throughout the parade.

2026, the traditional Grand Parade format has the parade starting from the entrance of St. John's Estate along L.B. Scott Road, Bush Road, Pondfill, Front Street and ending at Festival Village on Soualiga Road."

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Publisher
Paul De Windt

Coordinators
Darlene Hodge
Martha Marsden

Contributors
Judy Fitzpatrick
Darlene Hodge
Martha Marsden
Rajesh Chintaman

Graphic Designer
Evadine Henriques

Cover Image
Xscape the Band

Copy Editor
Sharon van Ameman

Operations Manager
Steven De Windt

Advertising Coordinator
Moira Marcelle



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Lighted Parade brings a new glow to Carnival 55

For the first time in its official history, St. Maarten's Carnival will feature a Lighted Parade, adding a dazzling new dimension to the 55th anniversary celebrations. Designed to transform the road into a glowing spectacle, the event introduces a fresh night-time experience that complements the traditional daytime parade.

"The Lighted Parade is essentially a night-time road parade built around illumination, lights, glow effects, and the visual energy that comes alive after dark," explained Michael Granger, St Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) member. While the idea has been in the works for some time, its debut aligns perfectly with this milestone year. "We wanted to do this since 2020, but COVID interrupted. We decided to save it for an anniversary year. It is basically the same Labour Day parade (second day parade) – just at night."

The concept is simple yet striking, focusing heavily on visual impact. "Just lights, lights and more lights," Granger said, capturing the essence of what patrons can expect. From glowing costumes to illuminated trucks, the parade promises a unique atmosphere that sets it apart from traditional Carnival events.

Between 15 and 20 bands or musical groups are expected to accompany the parade, ensuring that the vibrant sound of Carnival remains at the forefront, even as the visuals take centre stage. The route follows a familiar path. "The parade route is the same as the regular Labour Day parade would be. It begins at Carnival Village, moves down Pondfill, turns at the intersection towards Real Auto, Front Street, then ends back at the Carnival Village."

Hosting a night-time event presents its own set of challenges, particularly in terms of safety and visibility. "At night, the main concerns are visibility, crowd movement, vehicle safety, and quick emergency response." To address these concerns, a comprehensive plan has been put in place.

"Based on how other 2026 Carnival road events are being handled, the measures include a strong police presence, traffic control, clearly managed parade movement, and enforcement of public safety rules along the route."

Additional emphasis has been placed on lighting and spacing. "Because this is a night-time event, there is added emphasis on lighting, spacing, and keeping the route

clear for both revellers and emergency access." Coordination with relevant authorities has ensured that darker areas along the route are properly illuminated.

Security arrangements mirror those of the Grand Parade. "Same as Grand Parade," Granger confirmed, noting that established systems are being applied to ensure consistency and reliability. All necessary approvals have already been secured. "All permits for Carnival have been issued," he added, dismissing concerns about potential delays.

As a first-time official event, the Lighted Parade carries a sense of excitement and anticipation.

"This is the first year we are doing it. All previous iterations were privately organised." That official recognition elevates the parade, making it a key highlight of Carnival 55.

Spectators are encouraged to take precautions to fully enjoy the experience. "Come early, follow instructions from police and SCDF, remain aware of your surroundings, supervise children closely, avoid blocking parade movement, and plan transportation in advance."

Given the night-time setting, extra attention to visibility and personal safety is advised.

While specific standout features remain under wraps, there is plenty to look forward to. "Yes, the public will have to come out to see," Granger said, hinting at surprises that will unfold on the night.

The Lighted Parade is designed to complement, not replace, the traditional Grand Parade.

"The daytime Grand Carnival Parade is about colour, heat, road energy, and the full visibility of costumes in natural light. The Lighted Parade complements that by offering a completely different atmosphere – one built around illumination, mood, glow, and night-time spectacle." Together, the two events create a layered Carnival experience that highlights both tradition and innovation.

With expectations high and curiosity building, the Lighted Parade is poised to become one of the most talked-about additions to Carnival 55. As the island comes alive after dark, the glowing procession promises to deliver a magical, immersive experience that reflects the evolving spirit of St. Maarten Carnival while honouring its vibrant roots.

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📍 53 Pondfill Road, Philipsburg, St. Maarten
📞 +1-721-542-4050/58
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✉️ mail@officesxm.com
📞 +1-721-522-6114
📘 www.facebook.com/officeworldsxm

Culture Night: the essence of St. Maarten's multicultural spirit

As St. Maarten Carnival celebrates its milestone 55th edition in 2026, one of the most meaningful events on the calendar is set to take the spotlight – Culture Night. Scheduled for Monday, April 13, in the Carnival Village, this special evening invites residents, those from other islands and traveling visitors to connect with the rich heritage and traditions that define St. Maarten.

Culture Night is more than just a showcase; it is a powerful tribute to identity, history, and the diverse influences that have shaped the island over generations. From rhythmic drumming and traditional dances, to colourful costumes and expressive performances, the event captures the es-

sence of St. Maarten's multicultural spirit.

Beginning at 8:00pm, the stage at Jocelyn Arndell Carnival Village will come alive with a dynamic display of talent, featuring local groups and performers who embody the pride and passion of their communities. Each act tells a story, reflecting the island's unique blend of Caribbean, African, European, and Latin influences – all woven together into one spectacular experience.

Families, cultural enthusiasts, and Carnival fans are encouraged to come out in full support, waving their flags and celebrating together in true Carnival fashion. The evening promises a rich and engaging atmosphere where tradition meets creativity, and where

every performance highlights the heartbeat of the island.

Organizers are also extending an open invitation to individuals and groups who wish to participate in this grand showcase. Those interested can still be part of the line-up by reaching out via email at info@sxm-carnival.com.

As the 55th edition of St. Maarten Carnival continues to build excitement, Culture Night stands as a reminder of what Carnival truly represents – a celebration of people, heritage, and shared identity.

Come out and experience the heartbeat of St. Maarten's culture at the 55th Edition of Carnival!

Secrets Mas brings 'Reflections' to life as Wathey passes baton for Carnival 55

As St. Maarten gears up for its 55th Carnival, Secrets Mas is preparing a bold and theatrical presentation while long-time troupe leader and avid reveller, Brenda Wathey, transitions into a new phase of leadership, marking a defining moment for the group.

"In true St. Maarten spirit of growth and unity, I'm stepping into a new phase of leadership within the troupe I have guided with passion and dedication for many years," Wathey stated, announcing that she is officially passing the role of troupe leader into new hands. Alicia Hart, Delan Thomas, Claudine Williams and Dwight Williams will now lead the troupe forward, bringing fresh energy while maintaining the strong foundation already built.

"This transition is not a step back, but a powerful step forward – one that celebrates legacy, embraces new leadership, and ensures the continued vibrancy and excellence of the troupe," she said, adding, "I have passed the baton and am simply guiding at this point."

The leadership shift comes as Secrets Mas prepares to hit the road with its 2026 theme, "Reflections" – a concept rooted in nostalgia, evolution and creative expression. The theme revisits iconic designs while reimagining them through a modern lens.

"This year, Secrets Mas is portraying 'Reflections' for old times' sake, which showcases our iconic designs from the past, blending the beauty of yesterday with the brilliance of today – a bold and immersive celebration of mystery and theatrical expression," Wathey explained.

The presentation will feature five sections – Roots, Tribal Echo, Warrior Goddess, Stardust and Fiesta – each offering a distinct story and aesthetic, while remaining connected under the overarching theme. "Roots" highlights cultural heritage and identity, while "Tribal Echo" is described as a powerful expression of rhythm, unity, and ancestral energy from our past *Wild Indian* theme. "Warrior Goddess" focuses on feminine strength and beauty, "Stardust" brings glamour and movement, and "Fiesta" delivers a vibrant, Latin-inspired burst of colour and rhythm.

The troupe will present 35 individuals, along with Queen Cleo Carty and King Elias Jones. Costumes are expected to be a major highlight, with a rich palette of burgundy, forest green, gold, orange and blue, combined with feathers, sequins,



rhinestones, fabric and large-scale structures designed to captivate on the road.

"It's definitely Couture. Couture is our inspiration. We draw heavily from statement, high-fashion looks seen on international runways, blending that with global Carnival trends and theatrical storytelling. Our goal is always to create pieces that make revellers feel powerful, confident, and unforgettable," Wathey said.

"At the same time, we incorporate elements of our own culture and a touch of fantasy to ensure that every design is distinctive and stands out on the road. This year, 'Momo' comes out to celebrate for the 55th. Line the streets; it will be a spectacle."

Beyond the visual impact, Secrets Mas is focused on creating an immersive and emotional experience for both revellers and spectators. Around 150 participants are expected to bring the theme to life through movement, music and expression.

"As we're celebrating 55 years of St. Maarten's carnival, we want to evoke emotion, excitement, freedom, confidence and a celebratory mood. Our goal is for every reveller to feel like they can fully express themselves and embrace the spirit of Carnival. We don't just bring a troupe, we create an energy that embodies carnival," Wathey said.

Music will play a central role, with The Cut Creator DJ Outkast providing a high-energy soundtrack throughout the parade. "We are proud to once again feature St. Maarten's #1 Party DJ – The Cut Creator DJ Outkast, delivering a high-energy experience that keeps the road alive. Every reveller and spectator must feel the vibes when Secrets Mas music truck is passing from the start to the end at the village," she noted, adding,

"Expect a high-energy, nonstop vibe featuring a mix of local and regional soca hits, blending the best of this year and past years."

Participants can also expect a premium Carnival experience from start to finish. "From registration to the road, we are committed to delivering a premium, unforgettable Carnival experience. Our formula combines great music, stunning couture-inspired costumes, hands-on professional coordination, and personalized attention, all within a warm, family-oriented atmosphere. It's an experience rooted in pure enjoyment – one that stays with you long after King Momo is burned."

Even for Wathey, there is still an element of excitement in seeing the final designs come together. "Honestly, it's always a surprise, and that's something I truly enjoy. I trust the designers completely. They never disappoint. What I can say is that the overall concept and mood board reflect a fierce, bold, and dramatic aesthetic, capturing the energy and grandeur that 55 years of St. Maarten Carnival truly merits."

Reflecting on the evolution of mas, she noted the increasing standards and innovation within Carnival. "Mas has evolved significantly, with higher standards in materials, design, production, and overall presentation. There is now a stronger focus on branding, experience, and innovation, which has elevated the entire Carnival product. At the same time, there is a growing awareness of the importance of preserving the cultural roots of Carnival. With REFLECTIONS, we intentionally honour both where we've come from and where we're going."

Despite ongoing challenges such as rising costs and sourcing materials, the team remains committed to delivering a high-quality product while

exploring more sustainable practices.

"Challenges include sourcing materials, managing rising costs, and ensuring timely production. At the same time, we are actively engaging in meaningful discussions around shifting our focus toward sustainability, including the use of more eco-friendly materials to help protect and improve our island's environment. Despite these challenges, our team remains fully committed to delivering a high-quality product."

For Wathey, the passion behind Carnival remains unchanged: "Carnival is in my DNA, it's something I'm truly passionate about. On a lighter note, anyone who knows me knows I love anything bejewelled and glitzy. More importantly, participating in Carnival and witnessing the joy it brings to people is what continues to motivate me."

She also stressed the importance of continued support. "Continued support from sponsors, the community, and the carnival committee/organisers is key. Investment in Carnival helps ensure sustainability and growth for future generations."

While the troupe will compete for titles including Best Troupe, Best Male Individual and Best Female Individual, the heart of Carnival remains its people and shared energy. "It will always be the people: The coming together at the Village to share exciting energy in the lead up to Parade Day. The Village is truly the pulse of it all and it's something uniquely special to St. Maarten Carnival that you don't quite experience anywhere else."

With "Reflections," Secrets Mas is not only showcasing couture, culture and creativity, but also telling a story of growth, unity and transition – honouring the past while confidently stepping into the future.



Kooyman's link-up cornuh is back again this year!

Kooyman's battle of the booths to play out on social media

Don't miss the booth competition, link-up cornuh and special raffle!

Kooyman is once again hosting its exciting booth competition, rewarding booth-holders, who take their carnival business seriously, with prizes and extra coverage. This year, adding to the excitement and exposure factors is the fact that three social media influencers will be the ones doing the judging, they will explore the booths day-in, day-out, taking you along for the ride and ultimately picking their favourites. Kooyman is also hosting its link-up cornuh in the village and holding a special raffle in honour of 55 years of Carnival!

Follow Rahul (@prettyboirahul), Bianca (@bb_bad) and Ava (@therichaunti_) on Instagram as they explore the booths of Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village during the festivities and share their experiences. They'll rate the booths on aspects including cultural relevance and look, creativity, originality, cleanliness, and attention to detail. The three top booths will receive special prizes and gift vouchers from Kooyman.

Last year, Vybz Cyan Done (Booth #6) reigned supreme, taking home the title of winner.

While you're in the village exploring the booths and enjoying events, stop by at Kooyman's link-up cornuh, where you can sit down to enjoy your food and lime with friends. The Kooyman promo team will be present on some nights, hosting fun games. Make a game part of your experience, and you could win a Kooyman carnival T-shirt – limited edition.

Over at the store in Cay Hill, Kooyman will also be hosting a raffle on April 10 in honour of 55 years of Carnival. Spend US \$55, and you'll get a free shirt and have your name entered into a raffle where you have the chance to win great prizes including tickets to Night of the Hitmakers, Koncert X, Bacchanal Sunday, a custom Carnival pack, and 5500 Fun Miles!

Celebrate 55 years of Carnival on April 10th

Join our raffle to win great prizes & collect your free Carnival shirt*

Shop a minimum of \$55

*Available while stocks last. One shirt per customer.

kooymanbv.com



Last year's winner, Vybz Cyan Done (Booth #6).



FLAG FEST: ALL ABOUT HIGH ENERGY AND CULTURAL PRIDE

Straight into J'ouvert!

Flag Fest – undoubtedly one of carnival's biggest events – is a celebration of national pride. People proudly wave and wear their national flags from around the world, creating a strong sense of national and cultural pride. It creates a sense of connection, especially for the Caribbean diaspora – a bond and unity across the Caribbean and all continents.

Even though each island has its own unique identity and may be culturally different, Flag Fest brings everyone together celebrating differences while feeling like one community.

Fans, supporters, and newcomers are able to enjoy some of the top regional and international artistes and bands performing on one stage – all on one night. The vibe is unmatched – nonstop dancing, colourful outfits, creative flag wears, and a carnival-like energy similar to no other.

Known for being extremely high-energy, Caribbean Flag Fest is also known for its flag representation. It's a culture-packed Caribbean party that blends all genres of soca and bouyon music, cultural identity and celebration, and not forgetting the best carnival vibe into one experience. Come to experience Flag Fest and you'll find massive flag representation, nonstop high-energy Caribbean music, a massive unity of all nations, and the best carnival vibes.

As St. Maarten celebrates a milestone 55 years, Flag Fest is coming out bigger than ever: rather than being a stand-alone concert, the

non-stop high energy party is transitioning straight into J'ouvert.

Yes, the biggest carnival party this year is running straight into the next biggest carnival moment – J'ouvert morning. That makes this year bigger, more international, and more connected to the full carnival experience.

So, prepare yourself for the biggest soca / bouyon high energy carnival event for 2026. Don't forget to bring your flags and your camera, dress in creative flag-wear, make sure you are ready for J'ouvert, and try your first-time VIP experience.

We asked organisers about the returning performers. "Despite having a relatively small pool of bands and performers to choose from, who meet the level and musical style required for and at Caribbean Flag Fest events, returning artistes continue to be a favourite on both sides, organizers and the audience – or simply, our Flag Fest fans.

"They're valued because they know the vibe, connect effortlessly with the crowd, and consistently deliver the high energy that Flag Fest is known for, making each year feel both familiar and refreshingly new. In short, they understand the Caribbean Flag Fest assignment."

TRIPLE KAY INTERNATIONAL brings a different level of intensity. The excitement is very real – they bring a different kind of energy that instantly transforms the crowd. Their bouyon sound, nonstop energy, and powerful crowd connection turn any stage into pure vibes. When

they perform, the entire atmosphere shifts.

KES THE BAND brings the complete package – energy, hit songs, and real crowd connection. His performances are infectious, his music crosses cultures, and he knows how to turn any stage into a true Caribbean celebration. The key point is simple – he doesn't just perform; he creates a full Caribbean vibe and experience.

SIGNAL BAND has the ability to deliver a complete, high-impact live band experience that hits both musically and emotionally. They bring the full package – live musical excellence, versatility, and real crowd connection. They don't just perform; they create an experience that stays with you long after the music stops.

GRANDMASTERS BAND brings a classic-meets-high-energy band experience that resonates across generations. They combine experience, strong musicianship, and crowd connection to deliver a performance that feels both timeless and energetic. They don't just play music; they create moments the audience can feel.

BRANDON AND CHARNELLE OF ASAP BAND combine charisma, energy, chemistry, and crowd energy to create a performance that's electric, immersive, and unforgettable. The audience doesn't just watch; they become part of the celebration. When this duo hits the stage, they elevate the entire Caribbean Flag Fest experience.

LATEST & EXODUS HD bring high-octane unstoppa-

ble energy, innovative Caribbean sounds, and a full crowd connection, turning every Caribbean Flag Fest performance into a high-energy, unforgettable celebration.

SKILLFUL BAND brings pure Caribbean energy to every stage they touch. Known for their high-energy, crowd-pleasing performances, they blend soca, bouyon, and popular hits into a nonstop vibe that keeps the crowd moving from start to finish. This isn't just a performance, it's an experience.

Skillful Band has built a reputation for reading the crowd and delivering exactly what the moment needs, turning any event into a full-on celebration. Expect vibes, energy, and nonstop movement, because when Skillful Band hits the stage, the party level goes all the way up. They represent the new wave of Caribbean sound straight out of St. Maarten.

Flag Fest on the whole – including all the bands, artistes, DJ's and hosts – brings something you don't get from just listening to music. You get a live, immersive Caribbean experience. The bands and artistes don't just perform, they create the energy, unity, and cultural experience like no other, allowing fans to experience Life at Caribbean Flag Fest. This year at the 55th St. Maarten Carnival Celebrations, Caribbean Flag Fest will be a notch above the norm.

The Ultimate Caribbean Flag Fest VIP Experience! This year, get ready to sip, savour, wave and celebrate

at the Casa Bacardi Rum and Coca-Cola VIP Lounge – coming to Caribbean Flag Fest for the very first time! Enjoy signature cocktails, exclusive area, and a premium atmosphere designed for the ultimate festival experience.

Limited Access – Maximum Flavour

Reserve your spot and elevate your festival fun with refreshing Premium creations, Instagram-worthy moments, and vibes you won't forget. Visit the Caribbean Flag Fest social media pages and www.FlagFestSxm.com for more information on the Caribbean Flag Fest VIP experience.

Don't miss out!

Heartfelt thanks go out to all of the repeat Caribbean Flag Fest fans, the newcomers who will be joining this year, and the incredible team who makes it all possible. And a special thank you goes out to valued partners Bacardi, Monster, Tito's, Coca-Cola, Jack Daniel's, Presidente, Halley Aviation and WINAIR for their continued support, with WINAIR standing by Flag Fest for the past 11 years.

Flag Fest takes place on Sunday, April 26, starting at 8:00pm at Jocelyn Arndel Festival Village. If you are 15+ years, organisers welcome you to come experience life at Sint Maarten's 55th Carnival Festivities. Join in and be a part of Caribbean Flag Fest 2026, where repping your flags is not an option but a MUST!

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New, young talents take centre stage at Youth Extravaganza

~ Guest performer Jay Mills ~

The explosive talent of the youth will take centre stage once again, with a total of 16 acts in performance arts across the spectrum at the 2026 Youth Extravaganza. After a very brief break in 2025, the show – a mainstay of Carnival for 20 years – is back with a bang. Expect to be blown away by performances in dance, song, rap and more, by incredibly talented youth.

Presented by St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) and Teen Times (The Daily Herald's monthly publication and by the youth), Youth Extravaganza is a showcase for the youth, ages 13-21. Think of any local young adult making waves in the performing arts, and they've probably taken the stage at Youth Extravaganza in their younger years – a fact that organisers can be incredibly proud of.

This year's MC Rummer and special guest Jay Mills are no exception. Having taken this stage years ago in song and dance respectively, Rummer is now a singer, entertainer and social media influencer, and Jay Mills has been building an incredible professional dance career abroad, this year taking on the world stage in dancing in Bad Bunny's Super Bowl halftime show.

The main acts of the Youth Extravaganza, however, are 100% new performers on this stage – and that's the beauty of the show – new, young performers, getting to showcase their talents on the big stage. Organisers intentionally cast a wide net: the main criteria of performers are their age,

and the type of performance art is kept flexible – it's also open both to individuals and groups.

"Teen Times has always given talented young people a space to perform and we are very happy to have the extravaganza back on the carnival schedule, so that we may continue that mission," say the organisers.

They can reflect with pride on the performance artists who have graced the Youth Extravaganza during the show's 20-year history, which include BB Bad, DJ Outkast, Jay Mills, various dance groups and individual dancers, Skillful Band, Nati-sha Hanson, Tamillia, Keyla, Rummer, King Vers, and King James.

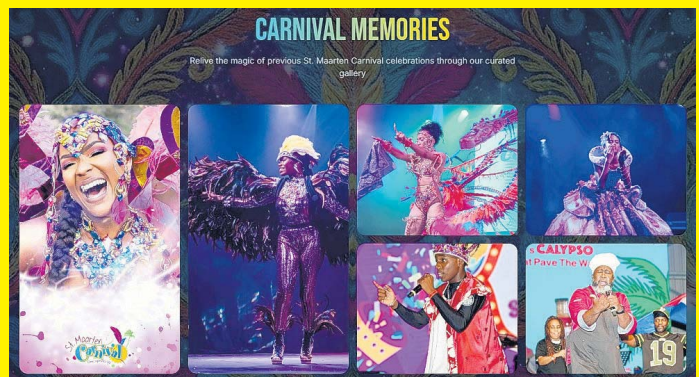
Youth Extravaganza will take place on April 27 from 8:00pm to 1:00am at the Carnival Village.



Carnival's new cutting-edge website:

www.sxmcarnival.life

~ Gifted by MP Ardwel Irion ~



A preview of the new app's photo gallery.

Designed to be your ultimate digital companion for the season, a new web application – www.sxmcarnival.life – was gifted to St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) by National Alliance (NA) Member of Parliament (MP) Ardwel Irion.

The platform, which prioritises clarity, mobile

accessibility and modern convenience, was made as part of a personal initiative by Irion, in response to community feedback. "This website is my personal gift to our culture and our people," he said, adding that he wanted to "build a world class digital experience that truly honours the spirit of St. Maarten Carnival."

In the face of ever-growing

interest and engagement for carnival, the platform offers a way for the foundation to seamlessly engage with the public. It also offers offline accessibility and includes the full event line-up and the option of adding events to your phone calendar with a single tap, a booth directory, and a section showcasing the various troupes.

Taste your way through the village

Food and drink are such an important part of the carnival experience. Every year, revellers look forward to indulging in their favourites and discovering new options. This is an introduction to three of the many booths that Carnival Village has to offer this year.

HORNA CORNA BY NAMASTE CUISINE (BOOTH #25)

About

Naomi Adriana: This year I'm presenting Booth #25 – Horna Corna by Namaste Cuisine.

We're bringing vibes, real Caribbean identity, energy, and flavour-packed food with a fun twist. From our signature Chicken Saté Burgers to our Horna Fuel Boxes, and all the comfort hits like oyster soup, wings, and cheese balls, we're here to feed the Carnival experience properly. It's all about good food, good energy, and real Carnival vibes.

This is my first time hosting my own booth, but I'm definitely not new to the Carnival kitchen.

Over the years, I've collaborated and worked behind the scenes with brands like Melting Pot, Bad & Boozy Bites, and Tippy Garden, helping to push out quality food and creative menus during Carnival.

This year is different. After years of contributing from over 20 years in Carnival through dance, choreography, performing, and working in the kitchen, this feels like the right moment to build something that truly reflects my style, my energy, and my experience.

Now I'm doing it on my own, alongside my cousin Shudiaka Priest, and we're bringing it to life in a way that's fully us.

Recommended bites

Our Chicken Saté Burger is a must – that's one of our signature items and something people always come back for.

The Horna Supply Box is a new addition this year, and I'm really excited about it. I've always had people asking for more – more than just a burger, more than just cheese balls, more than just wings. So, this box gives you the best of everything in one. It's definitely going to be a top night-time staple for us. And, of course, our oyster soup, which is always a hit, along with our cheese balls for that perfect comfort bite during Carnival.

If you had to try just one, I'd still say go for the Chicken Saté Burger, because it really represents our flavour and what we do.



Horna Corna by Namaste Cuisine

Specialty drinks

Yes, we're bringing some fun and personality with our drinks this year.

We have "Pace Yuh Self" – and the name says it all. Carnival is a long run this year, so this one is your reminder to take your time and enjoy the experience.

Then we have "Just a Friend" and "No Witness" – both bringing that playful, Horna Corna energy. We'll also have two signature shots – "Shake It" and "Buss Chest" – made to match the vibe and keep the energy going.

Our drinks are all about flavour, fun, and adding to the overall Carnival experience.

TEH BANG'N (BOOTH #3)

About

Nijerie and Allan: We specialize in serving a mix of flavourful food and refreshing drinks. Think savoury seafood, comfort dishes and signature cocktails. Our goal for Carnival is simple – great food, great vibes, and an unforgettable experience.

This is our first year hosting a booth, but it's something we've been thinking about for some time. So, when registration opened, we bit the bullet, and now we're here excited to finally be part of the Carnival experience.

Cooking has always been something we're passionate about, and we've been involved in the food business before. We love bringing people together through food, and Carnival felt like the perfect platform to do that. It's a time when everyone is outside, enjoying themselves, and looking for something good to eat, and we're here to deliver exactly that.

For us, Teh Bang'n is about serving quality, and giving people a reason to come back again (and again).

Recommended bites

Bacchanal Garlic Shrimp (Signature Dish). This is our specialty and a fan favourite. You can enjoy it on its own, with fries, or with our delicious homemade Johnny cakes. If you try just one thing, this should be it.

Bacchanal Calamari with Jerk Aioli. Crispy, flavourful calamari served with a bold jerk aioli that gives it the perfect Caribbean kick – a must for seafood lovers.

Oxtail Loaded Fries. Don't like seafood? Then we would recommend this! A true Caribbean comfort dish. Tender, flavourful oxtail loaded fries. Rich, satisfying, and definitely a crowd-pleaser. We also offer shrimp and chicken loaded fries, but the oxtail is a standout.

Specialty drinks

Tropical Climax (Signature Drink) A refreshing tropical blend with the perfect balance – not too sweet, not too strong, just right to keep you going all night!



Teh Bang'n

Teh Bang'n is also bringing the vibes with Coco Loco, one of St. Maarten's top coconut water brands, owned by the same team. Guests can enjoy fresh, natural coconut water, along with exclusive coconut-infused drink specials popping up throughout the Carnival season.

Coconut water is a Caribbean staple and it pairs perfectly with our dishes. It's packed with natural electrolytes and the best way to rehydrate and keep your energy up. So, if you need a quick pick-me-up during shows, or a reset after a little too much fun, Teh' Bang'n is your go-to hydration station!

BOSSETTES (BOOTH #63,64)

About

Jessica Rogers: Bossettes is a Carnival booth rooted in good vibes, bold flavour, and true Village energy. It's all about bringing people together through delicious food, fun specialty drinks, and a lively atmosphere that captures the spirit of Carnival. We offer a mix of crowd-favourite comfort foods, seafood items, creative late-night bites, and signature drinks that keep customers coming back. Come and Eat, Lime and Repeat.

This is not our first time hosting a booth. We casually started in 2023, our very first time. Bossettes has become a passion project because Carnival is one of the best times to connect with the community, celebrate our culture, create an experience that people genuinely look forward to at one of the biggest outdoor festival-food villages. We love the excitement, the creativity, and the opportunity to serve food and drinks that become part of people's Carnival memories. Doing so with some of the best entertainment – both local and international. Every year, we aim to raise the bar and make Bossettes bigger, better, and more memorable than before.

Recommended bites

Donut Burger – one of our standout favourites and a true Bossettes signature.

Horny Honey Wings – bold, flavourful, and always a conversation starter.

Seafood Box – featuring Firecracker Shrimp, Crab Back, Johnny Cake & Crack conch, served as a fun, flavourful combo.

If a customer can try only one item, we would say the Donut Burger. It's one of those items people hear about, get curious about, and then come back for again. It's fun, indulgent, and perfectly matches the playful Bossettes vibe.

Specialty drinks

Hit & Run – a bold, crowd-pleasing cocktail that delivers a smooth but memorable kick.

Pumpussy – our signature shot that has become a Bossettes favourite, playful in name and strong in personality.



Bossettes

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Night of the Hitmakers Highlight of Carnival 55 Saturday, May 2

As the excitement builds for Carnival 55, one of the season's most anticipated events – Night of the Hitmakers, scheduled for Saturday, May 2 – is set to deliver an energetic showcase of talent and lots of dancing at Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village. Doors will open at 7:00pm, welcoming patrons to what has become a cornerstone of the island's festive calendar.

flagship show of Carnival, Night of the Hitmakers continues to evolve as a cultural phenomenon, drawing in a large crowd eager to immerse themselves in the best of Caribbean music. The event is known for hosting the largest outdoor dance floor during the Carnival festivities, offering a vibrant atmosphere where music, culture, and celebration seamlessly come together.

Widely regarded as the Over the years, the show

has built a strong reputation for blending internationally acclaimed performers with homegrown talent, creating a dynamic and diverse musical showcase that reflects the spirit of St. Maarten.

This year's line-up promises to uphold that legacy with an impressive roster of artistes.

Headlining the event is the legendary zouk band Kassav, whose influence on Caribbean music spans generations. Joining Kassav is the renowned "Prince of Zouk" Oswald, who will bring timeless kompa classics to the stage. Oswald is also the Saint Martin Tourism Ambassador.

Fans of soca can look forward to high-energy performances from Barbadian star Edwin Yearwood and the ever-popular band Krosfyah – both known for

delivering crowd-pleasing hits that keep audiences dancing all night long. Representing the local music scene is St. Maarten's very own Control Band, adding a strong homegrown element to the evening's entertainment. Attendees can expect a premium production and an unforgettable experience.

In keeping with the event's signature style, Night of the Hitmakers will once again be staged as an all-white affair. Patrons are invited to dress in their finest white attire, adding an elegant visual flair to an already electrifying night, hosted by Uncle Shadz. With a powerful line-up and an electric atmosphere, this year's edition is poised to create lasting memories and stand out as one of the highlights of Carnival 55.

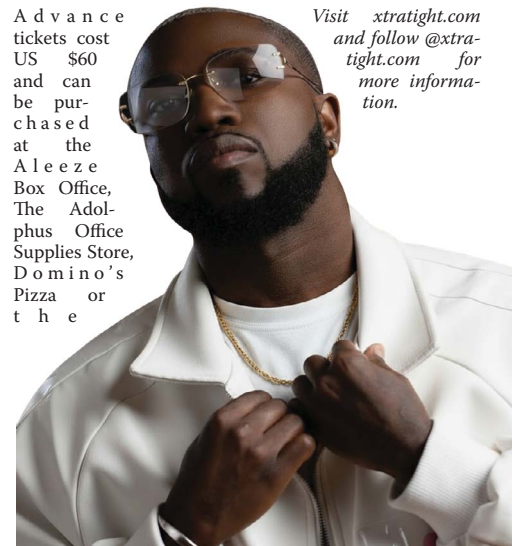
Night of the Hitmakers has become a defining Carnival

tradition – one that captures the essence of Caribbean celebration through music, unity, and colourful energy – so get your tickets early before they are sold out!

Advance tickets cost US \$60 and can be purchased at the A l e z e Box Office, The Adolphus Office Supplies Store, D o m i n o ' s Pizza or t h e

Levi's Store in Marigot. Tickets on the day of the show will be priced at \$70. This event is sponsored by Delta Petroleum, Kings Lottery, SOS Radio, Fun Miles and TelEm.

Visit xtratight.com and follow @xtratight.com for more information.



FIVE DJS TO LEAD THE VIBE AT CARNIVAL 55 TAKEOVER

As St. Maarten prepares for its milestone Carnival 55 – a 31-day celebration marking more than five decades of culture, music and community – one event is placing the spotlight squarely on the island's best-known DJs.

The DJ Takeover Concert, scheduled for May 4, forms part of this year's official Carnival line-up and brings together a select group of local DJs – Mix Master Pauly, The Cut Creator DJ Outkast, DeeJay Vybz, Deej Kilo and DJ King Kembe – for a night driven entirely by music, crowd energy and performance behind the decks.

Unlike traditional concert formats, the event shifts the focus from live acts to the DJs themselves – those who, for years, have shaped the sound of fetes, jump-ups and late-night sessions across the island. The stage will be on fire! With Carnival often described as the heartbeat of St. Maarten's cultural calendar, the DJ Takeover creates space to recognize the individuals responsible for sustaining that rhythm.

The five DJs featured in this year's Takeover reflect a cross-section of St. Maarten's DJ culture, from seasoned veterans with decades of experience, to performers who continue to push the craft forward. While each brings a distinct style and approach, they share a common role in shaping the sound and energy of Carnival – both on and off the main stage.

DJ Pauly

One of St. Maarten's longest-serving DJs, Mix Master Pauly began his career in the late 1980s and turned professional in the early 1990s. Decades later, he remains a consistent presence in the island's music scene, known for both his longevity and continued relevance.

His sets are rooted in variety, delivering a well-rounded performance that keeps audiences engaged across different musical styles. Over the years, he has built a reputation both locally and internationally, earning recognition as an undefeated Caribbean DJ champion through multiple competition wins.

Pauly has performed on major stages worldwide, touring alongside established artists and representing St. Maarten abroad. He points to Carnival as one of the island's most important platforms and encourages the public to support the DJs who continue to shape its sound.

DJ Outkast

With 30 years behind the turntables, Chantry Hodge – better known as The Cut Creator DJ Outkast – is one of the island's most experienced and recognizable DJs. Known for his open-format approach, he delivers sets that blend genres seamlessly to appeal to a wide audience.

What distinguishes his style is not only musical range, but also technical execution and stage presence. By combining mixing with live emceeing, he creates an interactive experience that goes beyond simply playing tracks.

Among his career highlights are a 2011 appearance on BET's 106 & Park – reaching millions of viewers – and placing second in the 2004 Heineken Green Synergy DJ Competition, where he represented St. Maarten against competitors from across the region.

DeeJay Vybz

Born and raised in French Saint Martin, DeeJay Vybz brings 27 years of experience to the turntables, building a career that spans both the local circuit and international stages.

His sound is driven by soca, dancehall and reggae, blending both classic and contemporary tracks into a continuous, high-energy experience. Known as the "Riddim Master," he distinguishes himself through creative re-fixes, layering different songs over familiar riddims to produce a fresh and dynamic sound.

His work has taken him beyond the island to events such as Miami Carnival and festivals across the Caribbean. For the DJ Takeover event, he promises a nonstop musical journey built on energy and crowd connection.

Deej Kilo

Giantonio Hasham, known as Deej Kilo, has spent 23 years developing his craft – a journey that began while studying in the Netherlands and has since grown into a strong presence within St. Maarten's music scene.

Kilo is known for his versatility, tailoring each set to the energy of the crowd. His selections move fluidly from Carnival classics to current Caribbean hits, with a focus on maintaining a consistent, engaging atmosphere. Central to his style is his ability to read the room and deliver the right track at the right moment.

His dedication is reflected in experiences such as traveling long distances across Europe for performances. He encourages the public to come out and support local DJs, promising a night of strong energy and nonstop entertainment.

CONTINUED ON PG. 13

DJ PAULY



DJ OUTKAST



DEEJAY VYBZ



FIVE DJS CONTINUED FROM PG. 12

DJ King Kembe

DJ King Kembe represents a newer generation of DJs, bringing a dynamic and performance-driven approach to the craft. Over the years, he has built a connection with audiences, both locally and internationally, steadily expanding his reach.

His sets are defined by high energy and adaptability, delivering a mix tailored to each crowd, while ensuring a fresh and engaging experience. A key part of his style is strong mic control, allowing him to interact with the audience and elevate the atmosphere in real time.

Among his standout moments are performances in Rotterdam before a crowd of more than 5,000 people and locally at large-scale events drawing thousands. He views the DJ Takeover as an opportunity to showcase the island's versatility and talent, offering patrons a diverse and memorable Carnival experience.

Together, these DJs represent the depth, experience and evolving sound of St. Maarten's music scene. From long-standing veterans to newer voices, each brings a distinct style shaped by years behind the decks and a deep connection to Carnival culture. As the DJ Takeover event approaches, the focus shifts to the individuals who keep the energy alive, night after night, track after track.

In many ways, DJs serve as the bridge between tradition and innovation, blending classic Carnival sounds with newer influences while responding in real time to the crowd. Their role extends beyond entertainment. They help define the atmosphere, set the pace of events and contribute to the shared experience that Carnival is known for.

The Takeover event not only highlights their individual talent, but also underscores the collective impact DJs continue to have on St. Maarten's cultural identity and nightlife.

**DJ
KING KEMBE**



Carnival vibes, not court dates: What could cost you this season

Carnival on St. Maarten is a time for music, movement and moments you'll talk about all year. From jouvert mornings to late-night fetes, the energy is unmatched. But while the road may be calling, so is responsibility. Because behind the glitter, sound systems and coolers, there is another reality many don't think about until it's too late – the price of crossing the line.

And no, we're not talking about ticket prices.

Each Carnival season, law enforcement sees a predictable pattern. High spirits sometimes turn into poor decisions; and poor decisions can turn into fines, or worse. The "2026 Transaction List" lays it out clearly: Certain behaviours come with immediate financial consequences, and they are not small.

Let's break it down in real terms:

Start simple. Not following a police officer's instructions during Carnival? That can cost you US \$165. It may seem minor at the moment, especially in a crowd where music is loud and everyone is moving, but officers are there to manage safety. Ignoring directions can quickly escalate situations.

Then there's "disturbing public order" – a broad category that includes disrupt-

ive behaviour. That will run you about \$105. Fighting in public? Same range. What might feel like "just a small altercation" in the heat of the moment is treated as a public offense.

And here's one people often overlook: Throwing bottles. Whether it's out of excitement, frustration or pure impulse, that one action could cost you \$260. During Carnival, with dense crowds and alcohol in play, that behaviour is taken seriously for obvious safety reasons.

Another common issue is public intoxication. Carnival and alcohol often go hand in hand, but there is a line. Cross it, and you're looking at a \$100 fine. Not catastrophic, but enough to ruin your night, and your budget.

Things become significantly more serious when you move into Penal Code territory:

Resisting arrest carries a fine of \$435. The same applies to verbal threats or possession of certain illegal substances in small quantities. Insulting an officer? That's \$260. It may feel like "just words," but legally, it is treated as interference with authority.

Physical harm, referred to legally as ill-treatment, jumps even higher at \$525. At that point, you're no longer in "Carnival mistake" territory. You're firmly in crimi-

nal conduct.

There are also rules around alcohol service:

Providing alcohol to someone under 18 carries a \$435 penalty. This is especially relevant for event organizers, bar operators and even individuals hosting private parties.

And then there are the more serious categories that people sometimes underestimate during Carnival:

Possession of a weapon – even something not classified as a firearm but intended to be used as one – can cost \$435. This reflects a broader focus on preventing escalation and maintaining public safety during large-scale events.

Drug-related offenses are also clearly outlined. Small quantities still carry significant fines:

Possession of cocaine: Up to three grams can cost US \$275, while slightly higher amounts jump to \$435. Marijuana possession in certain quantities ranges from \$225 to \$435.

The pattern is clear: What might feel like "small" or "normal" Carnival behaviour can quickly translate into hundreds of dollars in penalties.

But beyond the fines, there's a bigger point.

Carnival is one of the few times of year where the entire island moves together. Locals, visitors, families, friends – everyone shares the same space, the same rhythm. That only works when there's a baseline of respect for each other, for public order, and for the people tasked with keeping things safe.

Law enforcement presence during Carnival is not about limiting fun. It's about making sure the fun can continue, safely, for everyone.

So what does "smart Carnival" look like?

It's simple. Pace yourself. Stay aware of your surroundings. Respect instructions from police and event staff. Look out for your friends. And when in doubt, choose the option that won't follow you home in the form of a fine, or worse, a record, because at the end of the day, Carnival memories should be about music, costumes and unforgettable nights, not receipts you didn't plan for.

Enjoy the season. Just don't let one moment cost you more than it should.

Powerful vocals and timeless hits: Soulful Company, a Motown experience

St. Maarten's superstar artists are coming together for Soulful Company – one of the specialty branded shows of St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF). Soulful Company was designed to be a break from the usual genres we hear during Carnival to allow a more inclusive experience

during the fêteing season. Soulful vocals will take centre stage, with KRG Band weaving the magic that brings it all together.

This year, the musical genre selected is Motown. Think Aretha Franklin, Jackson 5, and groovy music. It is definitely something different, and a highlight of the calendar of festivities. Experience an unforgettable evening, combining the energy of Carnival, and the magic of Motown.

Expect a full 360-musical production – the island's best artists, live background vocalists, and a seven-piece live band. You'll hear some of the top

Motown era hits, along with some originals adapted to fit the genre of the evening.

The star studded line-up includes the following:

- ADRIEN NICASIO – new to the Soulful company family but not new to the stage. He delivered a high energy performance at the 2026 St. Maarten Heineken Regatta.

- NATISHA HANSON – known for her powerhouse vocals is returning to the Soulful company stage after her 2019 participation. She recently released a single called "Check up on me."

- SHAWN J – no stranger to the stage and known for his impeccable runs. Shawn J will perform hits from Stevie Wonder and Luther Van-

dross.

- MALAIKA MAXWELL – part of the launch of Soulful Company back in 2018 and then again in 2022, she returns to give us yet another soulful performance.

- KENYO BALLY – another returning performer at Soulful company, the Motown genre is a perfect fit for him.

- TAMILLIA – also part of the Soulful company family. She is the fastest rising star out of St Martin who needs no further introduction.

- ROYALTY – known for her strong vocals, performs regularly at entertainment venues across the island

and is no stranger to our biggest stages, including the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta and Qualichi Festival.

There will also be some new faces – two singers from the Charlotte Brookson Academy will grace the stage alongside our local superstars.

Come experience life with St. Maarten Carnival – Motown vibes with a local twist.

Soulful Company: A Motown Experience, presented by SCDF in collaboration with Motorworld, will take place on April 22 at 8:00pm in the carnival village. Admission is US \$20 per person.



Nine youngsters ready to take stage for Calypso Barbara Junior Calypso Competition

As Carnival marks its milestone 55th anniversary, one of the most meaningful and vibrant events on the calendar is once again shining a spotlight on the island's future stars – the fourth annual Calypso Barbara Junior Calypso and Road March Competition and Dow's Musical Foundation's (DMF's) Junior Steel Band competition set for April 11, starting at 5:30pm.

More than just a competition, this event stands as a celebration of culture, creativity, and continuity, ensuring that the heartbeat of calypso music continues to echo through generations.

Isidore "The Mighty Dow" York – a member of the coordinating team – spoke to *The Daily Herald* about just how significant the Junior Calypso Competition is, particularly in such a landmark year.

"The Junior Calypso Show is a vital part of this year's Carnival celebrations, especially as it marks the 55th anniversary. Beyond the milestone, the show plays an important role in preserving and continuing the island's cultural traditions. It provides a platform for young performers to ex-

press themselves through calypso, ensuring that the art form is passed down to the next generation. By nurturing young talent, the Junior Calypso Show helps keep the culture alive and guarantees its continuity for years to come."

That sense of continuity is at the core of the event. The Junior Calypso Show is not simply about crowning a winner; it is about cultivating a deep appreciation for calypso among the youth and giving them a voice. York underscores the importance of involving young people early, explaining: "It is important to get youngsters involved in the Junior Calypso Show because they represent the future of the art form. Their participation ensures the continuity and longevity of calypso, allowing the tradition to be passed down from one generation to the next. By engaging young people early, it helps preserve the cultural heritage while also giving them a voice to express their creativity and perspectives through music."

This year's line-up reflects that bright future, with nine talented contestants ready to take the stage in the Calypso category. The com-

petitors include Queen A, Bony Gyal, Mr. Fantastic, Island Gyal, Empress Jeweltz, Lazy Darius, Princess Peterson, Legendary Lolo, and King JoJo, ranging in age from 12 to 16 years old. Representing three schools – Milton Peters College, Charlotte Brookson Academy of the Performance Arts (CBA), and St. Maarten Academy – the majority of contestants come from the Academy's academic and vocational sections, highlighting the strong role that educational institutions play in nurturing artistic talent.

Audiences can expect performances that are as thoughtful as they are entertaining. According to York, "Audiences can expect a mix of social commentary and real-life themes, with many contestants performing songs they helped write themselves. The performances will range from emotional to upbeat, reflecting current issues and showcasing the creativity of the youth." This blend of reflection and rhythm is what makes junior calypso so compelling; it captures the voices of a generation learning to interpret the world around them.

One of the standout aspects of this year's show is its commitment to originality. All performances are original compositions, as cover songs are not allowed. This year, about 75-80% of the lyrics were written by the students themselves, making the performances even more authentic and personal. But the melodies were created by Andrew "Baker" Richardson and York himself.

This collaboration between experienced musicians and young lyricists ensures that each performance carries both professional polish and genuine youthful perspective.

Judging will be comprehensive, focusing on multiple elements that together define a strong calypso performance. "Performances will be judged on key criteria including lyrics, melody, rendition, musical arrangement, performance, and overall presentation," York explains. While there will be winners, the emphasis remains on participation and growth.

Every contestant will receive a \$100 participation fee, reinforcing the idea that each young performer's effort is valued. For those who place at the top, the rewards are also significant, with \$1,500

awarded to the winner, \$750 for the first runner-up, and \$375 for the second runner-up in the Calypso category.

Behind the scenes, preparation has been intense and ongoing for months. "Contestants have been preparing for months through workshops and training sessions held since December and January, helping them develop their skills in calypso and performance." These sessions not only refine technical ability but also build confidence and stage presence, key ingredients for any successful performer.

The show also promises a sense of continuity and celebration, with last year's 2025 Junior Road March winner, Quando, set to make an appearance. "Yes, last year's 2025 Junior Road March winner, Quando, will be present to pass on the crown, with additional guest appearances expected, including a possible guest from Saba."

Support from the community remains crucial to the success of the event. York encourages everyone to get involved, noting, "Parents, teachers, and the community can support

contestants by providing costumes, props, and encouragement, purchasing tickets, and attending the show to help promote and sustain the art form." That collective effort transforms the Junior Calypso Show into more than just a performance – it becomes a shared cultural experience.

Special recognition is also given to those working behind the scenes to make the programme possible. "Special thanks to the Cultural Participation Fund from the Netherlands for supporting the ongoing calypso training program, as well as to the parents and students for their dedication. While winners will be celebrated, the true focus is on participation, growth, and preserving the culture, making the experience both educational and meaningful for everyone involved."

As the stage lights come up and the young voices rise in song, the Junior Calypso Show promises to deliver not only entertainment but inspiration. It is a reminder that the future of calypso is already here: Bold, creative, and ready to carry the rhythm forward for another 55 years and beyond.

Latin Night set to deliver high-level, unforgettable experience for Carnival 55

Latin Night is set to return as one of the standout events of St. Maarten's 55th Carnival, with organisers promising a high-energy, innovative production designed to go beyond the traditional concert experience.

The vision for this year is to elevate the event to new heights. "Position Latin Night as an experience that goes beyond a traditional concert, offering a high-level production that is innovative and full of surprises. Our goal is to generate great excitement among the public and deliver a unique and unforgettable night for all attendees," promoter Pedro Richards said.

Richards, who, along with his team, has taken on the role for this year's edition, expressed gratitude to the Carnival Committee while underscoring the broader impact of the event. "First, I thank the Carnival Committee for the trust placed in me and my team. We have taken on this challenge with the conviction that we have the capacity and vision to develop events of this level."

He added that the initiative also aims to inspire the next generation: "It also represents a great opportunity to inspire youth, demonstrating that with hard work and perseverance, dreams can become reality. We also firmly believe in supporting the new generation that is emerging and that needs space and opportunities to grow."

This year's event introduces a fresh direction led by a young and dynamic team. "This year, the event marks the beginning of a new phase led by a young team, with a fresh vision and a strong desire to innovate," the promoter explained, promising a renewed concept filled with energy, surprises, and a memorable experience for all.

A diverse line-up of international artistes is expected, covering multiple Latin genres. Performers include Grupo Adolescentes in salsa, Sujeto Oro 24 in urban merengue, bachata artiste Dalvin La Melodía – described as the "Revelation of the Year at the Soberano Awards in the Dominican Republic" – and reggaeton star Don Miguelo.

Attendees can expect a full musical experience: "All musical genres in one complete night – merengue, bachata, salsa, and reggaeton."

To maintain Latin Night's reputation as one of Carnival's largest and most anticipated shows, the promoters are focusing on constant evolution. "Our strategy is based on constant innovation and evolving alongside new entertainment trends. We actively listen to the opinions and expectations of the public to strengthen each edition, incorporating improvements in production, concept, and overall experience."

Spectators can expect a visually striking and immersive production. "Attendees can expect a production full of surprises and impactful moments," including "special elements such as visual effects, pyrotechnic shows, and a dynamic stage setup that will elevate the audience experience."

Beyond entertainment, Latin Night plays an important cultural role within Carnival. "Latin Night plays a very important role in the cultural and entertainment diversity of Carnival, as it reflects the strong presence and valuable contribution of the Latin community on the island." The event also promotes unity and cultural exchange, creating a shared festive experience.

The promoters aim to attract a wide audience. "We expect to attract a



diverse and multigenerational audience, thanks to a varied line-up of artistes that connects with different tastes and ages. Our goal is to create an inclusive, festive, and energetic atmosphere."

Public response so far has been overwhelmingly positive. "The public's response has been very positive. We have received a high level of interest and strong ticket demand since the announcement of the event, which reflects the excitement surrounding this edition."

As a new promoter, building trust was one of the main challenges. "As a new promoter, one of the main challenges was gaining the trust of major companies and strategic partners within the industry. However, thanks to consistent work and the vision of the project, we were able to move forward successfully."

The promoter acknowledges supporters, and thanks companies such as CCI, RIA, King Lottery, BFIT GYM, and the SXM Taxi App, who trusted the initiative from day one.

Safety and organization remain top priorities. "Safety and efficient organization are our top priority," with a comprehensive plan that

includes specialized security teams, strategic logistics coordination, and protocols to ensure order and wellbeing for all attendees.

At its core, Latin Night serves as a unifying platform during Carnival. "During Carnival, it becomes a space where people of different nationalities come together as one big family to celebrate and share one of the most special seasons of the year."

The promoter closes with an invitation to the public: "We invite everyone to be part of Latin Night this year and experience a high-level entertainment event full of surprises, energy, and unforgettable moments. Our entire team is working with great dedication and passion to deliver a show that meets the expectations of the public. Your support is essential to continue empowering a new generation committed to bringing joy, culture, and fun in a night that promises to be truly unique."



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LUV LUX MAS CELEBRATING UNITY, CULTURE WITH "RHYTHMS OF THE CARIBBEAN"

As St. Maarten prepares for its 55th Carnival season, Luv Lux Mas is returning to the road with a vibrant, music-driven presentation that will celebrate culture, identity and unity across the region. Now in its second year, the troupe is building on its debut with a renewed focus on experience, connection, and delivering a memorable journey from start to finish.

At the heart of this year's presentation is the theme "Rhythms of the Caribbean" – a concept that reflects the rich diversity of the region and the many cultures that call St. Maarten home. "It is a celebration of the diverse genres of music across the Caribbean, representing the many cultures and nationalities that call our island home." Through this theme, Luv Lux Mas aims to create an atmosphere where music, mas, and cultural expression come together seamlessly on the road.

Entering its second year, the troupe carries with it important lessons learned from its first experience. Organizers acknowledged that no matter how much planning is done, unexpected challenges are always part of the process. "Yes, this is our second year, and one of the biggest lessons we learned is never to underestimate the scope of work involved. No matter how much planning is in place, things can and will change." With that in mind, this year's approach has been more refined and intentional. "This year, we've placed a stronger focus on refining and elevating the overall road experience."

That commitment reflects the reality of leading a mas troupe in St. Maarten, which requires continuous effort well beyond the Carnival season itself. "Leading a mas troupe is not something I take lightly. It requires extensive planning, coordination, and dedication. From the moment Carnival ends, it's already time to return to the drawing board and begin preparations for the following year." This level of dedication speaks to the passion behind the troupe and its desire to grow year after year.



The concept of "Rhythms of the Caribbean" comes to life through five distinct sections, each representing a unique musical genre and cultural influence. Together, they form a cohesive story that highlights the diversity of Caribbean music and identity. The Zouk section is described as "our fresh and vibrant section representing unity among nations and the diverse cultures of the Caribbean," setting the tone for togetherness and shared identity. The Salsa section follows with a lively and expressive energy – "celebrating our Latin community and its strong cultural influence"

– reflecting the important role of Latin culture on the island.

The Soca section brings what organisers describe as the heartbeat of Caribbean music to the road. It is "bringing energy, freedom, and the true spirit of Carnival," capturing the essence of what the festival represents. Rhythm and Bass – described as "our local gem, highlighting the unique sounds and musical identity rooted within our island" – pays tribute to St. Maarten's own cultural voice. Meanwhile, the Bouyon section showcases a newer and evolving sound, "a rising star in Caribbean music, representing its rich culture with a modern and dynamic twist."

Costumes are another central element of the Luv Lux Mas experience, designed not only to be visually striking, but also to reflect the individuality of each reveller. "Our costumes this year are beautifully adorned, offering a variety of styles and coverage options to suit different preferences." The troupe continues to embrace bold and eye-catching designs that stand out along the parade route. "As always at Luv Lux Mas, we embrace bold and statement pieces – especially our signature large backpacks – designed to stand out on the road." These signature elements have become part of the troupe's identity, helping to create a recognizable and distinctive presence.

While some bands prioritize size, Luv Lux Mas is taking a more intentional approach by focusing on quality and experience. The troupe is aiming for approximately 50 revellers per section – a decision that allows for a more personalized and premium environment. "While we plan to grow over time, we intentionally maintain a more intimate band size to ensure that every participant has a premium and enjoyable experience." This emphasis on intimacy is tied directly to the troupe's philosophy.

"While many bands focus on numbers, Luv Lux Mas focuses on people." This approach is reflected in how the

CONTINUED ON PG. 17



LUV LUX MAS CONTINUED FROM PG. 16

troupe interacts with its members throughout the entire process. "We prioritize personalized communication, ongoing support throughout registration, payments, and distribution, and building genuine connections with our masqueraders." The goal is to ensure that every individual feels valued and connected. "Our goal is for every individual to feel like they are part of a community – not just wearing a costume."

Music remains at the core of the Carnival experience, and Luv Lux Mas is committed to delivering a full and immersive soundscape on the road. With the return of the T.G. band and the troupe's core DJ line-up, along with special guest additions, the energy is expected to remain high throughout the parade. "Revellers can expect a full Caribbean musical experience, covering a wide range of genres from start to finish. We aim to leave no stone unturned when it comes to delivering an authentic and vibrant sound." This musical diversity aligns perfectly with the troupe's theme and reinforces its focus on unity through rhythm and culture.

That message of unity is central to everything the troupe aims to achieve this year. "The message we aim to portray is unity. As a melting pot of cultures, we want to show that through music, mas, and love, we can come together and celebrate as one." In a culturally diverse society like St. Maarten, this message resonates strongly, highlighting the role Carnival plays in bringing people together.

This year's presentation will also feature new collaborations, adding fresh energy and perspectives



to the road experience. Luv Lux Mas will welcome Uforik Mas from the northern side of the island, as well as Ecstasy Mas from Dominica. These additions further strengthen the troupe's commitment to diversity and cultural exchange.

Interest in the troupe has been strong, reflecting growing recognition and support. "At this stage, I can confidently say that registration has been very successful." While organizing a troupe comes with its challenges, the main difficulty has been balancing personal responsibilities with the demands of managing the band. "The biggest challenge has been balancing personal life alongside the demands of managing the band." Despite this, the team reports that the overall preparation process has been smooth.

Looking beyond this year's Carnival, Luv Lux Mas has its sights set on long-term growth and international expansion. "We are in this for the long run. Our vision is to continue growing while expanding internationally, with presence already building across four countries." That vision is already taking shape, with new sections being launched overseas. "We have recently launched our Rotterdam and United Kingdom sections, and we are already looking forward to expanding further as we build toward our 2027 calendar."

As the countdown to Carnival 55 continues, Luv Lux Mas remains focused on delivering a memorable and meaningful experience for its revellers. Stated simply, the goal is clear: 'An unforgettable one.'



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12 Llama Drive – Cay Hill – Sint Maarten

Junior Carnival Parade tips for the best experience

The youthful spirit of St. Maarten Carnival comes alive on Sunday, April 19, with the highly anticipated Junior Carnival Parade – a vivacious highlight of the island's 55th Carnival celebrations. This parade showcases the island's youth as they take to the streets in dazzling costumes, energetic dance routines, and local music, celebrating Carnival in true fashion. This parade starts at 1:00pm at John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark.

What to expect

Set to start at 1:00pm from John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark, the Junior Parade is a family-friendly event where children and teens shine. They are dressed in beautifully designed outfits, representing different themes and traditions. There will be a joyful atmosphere filled with music, laughter and cute, young revellers bringing Carnival magic to life.

Arrive early for the best spots

If you want a great view, plan to arrive early. Popular viewing areas along the parade route fill up quickly as spectators gather to enjoy the festivities. The parade route will be from John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark, then on to the Bush Road roundabout, down Bush Road, over Prince Bernhard Bridge, on to Pondifill road and then finishing at Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village. If you don't want to miss a moment of the action, make sure you secure

your spot ahead of time.

To stay comfortable throughout the parade, bring the following:

- A folding chair for easy seating.
- Sunscreen to protect against the Caribbean sun.
- An umbrella or hat for shade.
- Cash to taste the local food offerings.

Stay hydrated

April temperatures in St. Maarten can be hot, especially during daytime events. Be sure to bring water and stay hydrated so you can fully enjoy the parade from start to finish.

Dress comfortably

Wear comfortable shoes and light clothing. You may be standing, walking, or moving around to get the best views, so comfort is key.

Capture the moments

Don't forget your camera or phone! From bright costumes to energetic performances, the Junior Carnival Parade is filled with picture-perfect scenes. It's a great opportunity to capture memories of kids celebrating culture in a truly joyful way.

The Junior Carnival Parade is a must-see event that highlights the heart and future of Carnival in St. Maarten. Arrive early, come prepared and get ready to enjoy one of the most colourful days of the season! Visit sxmcarnival.life for more info.



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ONE LOVE REGGAE CONCERT

The rhythmic pulse of reggae will take over Festival Village as the One Love Reggae Concert lights up the stage during St. Maarten Carnival 2026 celebrations. Set for Friday, April 24, at 8:00pm

sharp, this highly anticipated event promises a night filled with music, culture, and the unifying spirit of the Caribbean.

Headlining the concert is Morgan Heritage, a multi-Grammy Award-winning reggae institution whose music, message, and mission have helped define modern roots reggae for over three decades. Founded by the children of Jamaican reggae icon Denroy Morgan Sr., the group has carried a powerful legacy of culture, consciousness, and global unity to stages around the world.

Known as reggae royalty, Morgan Heritage has released 12 studio albums, earned multiple Grammy Awards, and built a catalogue rooted in love, Rastafarian consciousness, social justice, family, and faith. Their music has bridged Jamaica, Africa, Eu-

rope, the Americas, and beyond, making them one of the most influential forces in international reggae.

Now entering a powerful new chapter, the group continues its journey as Morgan Heritage 2.0. With Una Morgan back on the road and the torch passed to Jemere Morgan, eldest son of Gramps Morgan, the band embraces a new generation while honouring its deep-rooted legacy. Jemere has stepped forward as frontman, leading the group on global stages with authenticity, humility, and strength, earning widespread respect from fans and industry peers alike. Every performance carries the spirit and legacy of the late lead singer Peetah Morgan, whose presence remains deeply woven into the band's sound and message. This new era is not a departure, but a continuation – keeping the mission alive to uplift, unite, and preserve reggae music for generations to come.

Reggae Night will also feature Jamaican reggae talent D'Yani, an artiste steadily carving his name into the

modern reggae and dancehall scene. Hailing from Spanish Town in St. Catherine, Jamaica, D'Yani brings a contemporary approach to the genre while staying rooted in its rich traditions. Inspired by legendary performers like Bob Marley and Jackie Wilson, he channels deep emotion and authenticity into every performance.

Known for his soul-stirring songwriting, D'Yani blends catchy melodies with clever lyrics and relatable storytelling, creating music that resonates with a wide audience. His artistry has not gone unnoticed, earning him recognition from industry figures such as Robert Livingston, Cordell "Skatta" Burrell, and Cecile Charlton. D'Yani's live performances have become a defining part of his growing reputation. He has graced major stages including Sting 2016 and multiple editions of Reggae Sumfest. One of his standout moments came at Reggae Sumfest 2023, where he surprised fans by bringing out Jada Kingdom for an electrifying performance of their hit single "Feelings".



The One Love Reggae Concert will transform Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village into a hub of pulsating rhythms, positive vibrations, and unity. This night is a celebration of true reggae message of peace, love, and togetherness set against the colourful backdrop of Carnival. Advance tickets are priced at \$50 and are available at Motorworld in Cole Bay. Stay tuned for updates and secure your spot at what is shaping up to be one of the most memorable

nights of the season.

As the countdown to St. Maarten Carnival continues, the One Love Reggae Concert stands out as a must-attend event where island energy meets world-class talent. Sponsored by Motorworld, Native Nations and St. Maarten Carnival. Come experience island life and true Caribbean "One Love" vibes. Visit sxm.carnival.life for more info.

MIX MASTER PAULY:

THE SOUNDTRACK OF ST. MAARTEN CARNIVAL

For more than three decades, one constant has remained behind the decks of St. Maarten's Carnival – Mix Master Pauly. From the vinyl era to today's digital stage, from intimate house parties to crowds of thousands inside the Festival Village, Pauly has built a career defined not only by longevity, but by adaptability, cultural awareness and an unwavering connection to the people in front of him.

His story begins, as many do, with music at home.

Growing up in a family surrounded by musical talent, Pauly was exposed early to rhythm and sound. But it was a specific moment that set him on his path – watching his cousin, already a DJ, manipulate records on a turntable. That image stayed with him.

"I heard my cousin scratching on record players, and that stuck with me," he recalled.

What followed was a steady rise rooted in practice, exposure and opportunity. His first performance was modest, a house party, but it did not take long for his talent to scale.

"In my early teens, I played at the Sports Auditorium in front of about 2,500 people," he said in an interview for *The Daily Herald's* Carnival Special.

That early leap from small gatherings to large audiences would become a defining pattern of his career.

His name, too, evolved alongside his craft. What started simply as *DJ Pauly*, shifted after a pivotal encounter with DJ Kid Capri, a respected figure in international DJ culture.

During a shared event, Kid Capri offered direct advice: Drop the "DJ" and create a name that stands apart. The result was "Mix Master Pauly" – a title that would go on to carry weight not just locally, but across decades of performances.

A Carnival Institution

Pauly's relationship with St. Maarten Carnival dates back to the 1990s, placing him among the longest-serving DJs on the festival circuit.

His entry into Carnival was not passive. He was part of building it.

"The first Carnival event I played was the Youth Extravaganza," he says. *"I was also part of creating the concept of that show."*

At the time, the Youth Extravaganza was more than just another event; it became a platform for emerging talent and a central fixture in the Carnival line-up. For Pauly, it also became a proving ground.

He recalled the DJ battles that defined those early years, competitions that placed skill, timing and crowd control under direct scrutiny.

"I miss winning all those DJ battles," he says. *"The DJ competition was the headline part of that show."*

Those victories extended beyond the island. Pauly notes that he went on to win DJ battles internationally, further reinforcing his credibility in a competitive field.

Over the years, both the Festival Village and its audience have evolved.

"The Village has become more modern, which is great," he explained. *"Entertainment changes with different generations."*

Yet, despite these changes, the core of Carnival remains intact, a large-scale, culturally driven celebration where music plays a central role.

"It's basically the same, just on a bigger scale," he says. *"But more cultural."*

Reading the Crowd, Shaping the Sound

For Pauly, DJing Carnival is not simply about playing music, it is about understanding the moment.

"It's Carnival, that's the music we go by," he said, referring to the seasonal shift toward soca and local sounds that define the festival atmosphere. At the same time, he recognizes an ongoing tension within the local music scene.

"The St. Maarten sound needs to be recognized again," he said. *"But we are also a mix of many different cultural sounds."*

This dual identity, local and global, shapes both the expectations of the crowd and the decisions made behind the decks. One of the challenges he highlights is audience preference.

"The crowd still wants to hear those old songs, even when there are many newer local songs to play," he notes.

That balance between nostalgia and progression is one every experienced Carnival DJ must navigate. Central to that process is the role DJs play in promoting local music.

"A DJ's role is one of the most important when it comes to local music being played on the island," Pauly said. *"But we need more local music, both during Carnival and outside of it."*

Timing, he added, is everything.

"There are many good local songs that can get a strong response; it depends on the timing and the crowd."

Versatility and Control

Ask Pauly to define his style, and he avoids narrowing it down.

"I bring good vibes to the stage," he says. *"I never labelled myself with one sound or style; I bring versatility."*

That versatility is not just a creative choice; it is a functional necessity in an environment as dynamic as Carnival. His role often extends beyond performance into responsibility.

"Yes, many times I've had to save a party," he says. *"I'm usually the one closing the show."*

Closing a Carnival event requires more than technical skill. It demands endurance, awareness and the ability to maintain energy long after peak hours.

"Keeping the energy up for everyone to enjoy – it's the biggest party of the year," he said.

And when it comes to impact, Pauly is direct.

"A party can't turn into a real jam until Mix Master Pauly is behind the music."

Evolution of the Craft

Few DJs working today can claim to have started in the vinyl era and remained active through every technological shift since. Pauly is one of them.

"I was fortunate to start in the vinyl era and still be relevant today," he says.

For him, the transition from vinyl and CDs to digital platforms did not diminish the craft; it simply changed the tools.

"It never affected the craft," he explained. *"The shift just made things easier."*

What has changed more significantly, in his view, is the culture surrounding DJing.

"Today's DJing is mostly about social media," he said. *"Back*

then, DJs paved the way."

That distinction underscores a broader point about longevity versus visibility – an issue he feels strongly about.

His advice to younger DJs reflects that perspective.

"Stay humble, work hard, build your brand and never forget who helped you."

Pauly also acknowledges his informal role as a mentor.

"Yes, I do," he says. *"Many younger and older DJs ask me questions based on my knowledge and worldwide experience."*

Looking ahead, he sees both opportunity and risk.

"Because of technology, everyone can become a DJ," he says. *"But you should also learn the art of it."*

The Meaning of Carnival

Despite decades behind the decks, Pauly's connection to Carnival remains personal.

"It's the greatest celebration for the island," he said. *"The world comes to enjoy it with us."*

For him, Carnival is not just an event, it is a seasonal identity.

"I become very musical during Carnival," he explains, noting the shift in focus that comes with the festival period.

Each year blends into the next, not because they lack distinction, but because each carries equal significance.

"They all stand out," he said. *"This is our biggest party."*

If there is a defining moment within a set, it comes when local music takes centre stage.

"When I press play on a St. Maarten song, and then all the local songs follow, that brings the fete together."

Legacy in Motion

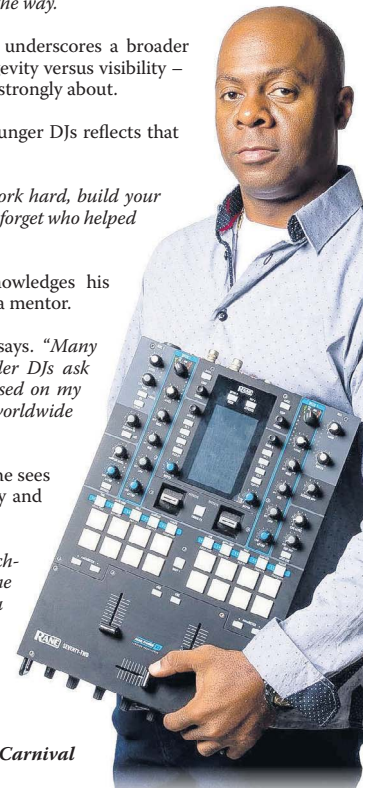
After years of performances, competitions and cultural shifts, Pauly remains focused on one thing: Connection.

"When the music stops, I want people to know they will still come out to support any Mix Master Pauly event," he said.

It is a statement rooted not in ego, but in consistency – an understanding that longevity in DJ culture is earned over time, one crowd at a time.

From vinyl records to digital playlists, from Youth Extravaganza battles to main-stage Carnival nights, Mix Master Pauly has not just witnessed the evolution of St. Maarten's music scene, he has helped shape it.

And as long as Carnival continues, his presence behind the decks remains part of its rhythm.



King Beau Beau, from then to now!

Get ready for a legendary concert celebrating the legacy of one of St. Maarten's greatest musical icons – King Beau Beau. The King will take the stage at Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village on Friday, April 17, serving up masterful music and unforgettable memories, as someone who helped to shape Carnival throughout the years, joined by special guest performers King Genius, King Jacko, and Kaiso Brat.

Leroy Brooks has collected many titles over his decades-long music career, including but not limited to Calypso Monarch of St. Maarten (a whopping 12 times between 1980 and 2022), Road

March King (two times), Antillean Calypso Monarch (three times), King of Kings Monarch, Leeward Islands Calypso Monarch, and Golden Voice Winner. The Golden Voice Song Festival win was his first, at just 16 years old.

He has written some 180 songs and has over 25 recordings. Two of his most recognisable hits include "Case from Hell" (Calypso, 1980) and "Coming with me stick in me hand" (Road March 1989).

The Daily Herald asked King Beau Beau what the audience can expect on this special night: "In this concert, we will take you all the way back to my early years

in the calypso artform. From as early as 1978 to present. I will be performing some of my most beloved calypso songs. Additionally, we will be taking you back all the way to 1976 with Monarchs who were crowned prior to me, Mighty Genius "Fire in the town", Jacko "Open your Eyes St. Maarten", and Kaiso Brat "What a Thing". We intend to entice you with Calypso in its original form and bring you a lot of social commentary and comedy. You will laugh and – depending on your memory – you will cry."

Music is about life. Over the years, his music has been inspired by real life experiences, social and political circumstances, and the news.

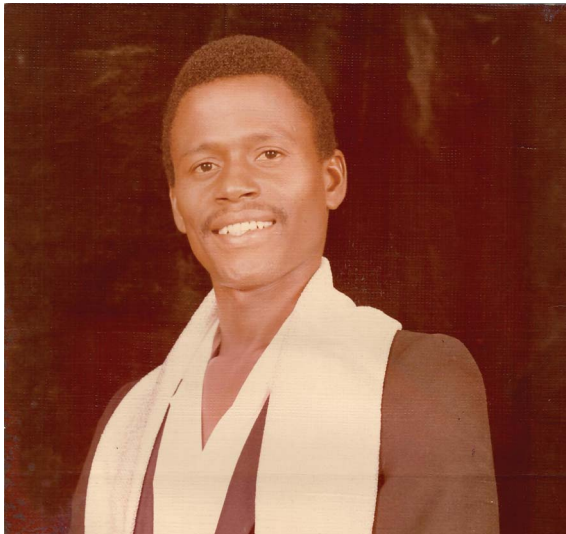
"I consider myself an old school type of artiste. I love to write/sing songs that are musically well arranged with an array of melody. Caribbean music in general (Calypso/Soca in particular) has lost a lot of the love for the actual musical arrangement," he said, missing a stronger focus on lyrics and melodies.

He is known mainly for his Calypso music but has also gained a reputation as a versatile entertainer, enjoying a variety of genres, especially when performing for international audiences. These include Soca, Reggae, Ballads, Kompa and Pop.

Looking back, he can remember loving music as a child, especially the music of The Mighty Sparrow. As a young boy, before he could have imagined what was to come, he remembers singing acapella on the Big Brother & Big Sister Show with Dave Douglas and Josianne Artsen, on PJD2 Radio up on Fort Amsterdam.

At age 12, Josianne, who was his music teacher, introduced him to the stage, where he played a character named Bobo, in "Big Business" – a school play that she directed. The name stuck and he eventually changed it to Beau Beau.

After high school, he was granted three scholarships and studied Music Merchandising with a minor in Communications at Hofstra University in New York. During college and in the years to come, he travelled throughout the Caribbean, US, Canada, Europe, and beyond. Many will remember him performing with



the dazzling Beaubettes, who often joined him in representing the island abroad, backed by the old St. Maarten/Saint Martin Association.

Pouring into his love of music over the years, he has created a lifetime worth of memories. Some of his favourite experiences include travelling, meeting and working with new artistes around the world, and collaborating with great artistes in the field of music.

A few of his all-time favourite

experiences are performing on stage in St. Maarten with the late great Percy Sledge, performing with his Beaubettes for the opening of the Movie Speed 2 in Los Angeles, California, and performing live at the Apollo Theatre in New York.

Don't miss out on a musical journey with the legendary King Beau Beau and friends – one of the true highlights of St. Maarten Carnival. Hosted at the Carnival Village on Friday, April 17. Tickets are US \$20.

II Brothers Entertainment leads charge to elevate Carnival with 'The Reunion'

Driving tourism, culture, Caribbean energy

As Carnival 2026 approaches, there's a powerful shift happening not just in sound, but in purpose. The energy surrounding St. Maarten Carnival is growing beyond the island's shores, and II Brothers Entertainment is stepping forward to help lead that movement.

Celebrating their fifth anniversary, II Brothers is positioning "The Reunion" as more than just an event – it's part of a bigger mission to strengthen tourism, expand international visibility, and create lasting partnerships that push St. Maarten Carnival to the top of the Caribbean.

This year's showcase is designed with both locals and visitors in mind – an immersive experience that captures the true spirit of Carnival while giving travellers a reason to choose St. Maarten as their destination.

Taking centre stage is a dynamic line-up of Caribbean talent: Trix Migos & Hussey, Dcamp & Lewis Melo, 1T1 & Theoma, Little Boy & Quan Dan, Ridge & Puddaz, Lejuh, Lestef, Kenn G, Reo, Nice, Pascal with Jusacschun Band, Ezee WMN, DJ Main Event, and DJ Siw'roo.

At the heart of the experience is Bouyon music – one of the fastest-growing genres in the region. Known for its high energy and infectious rhythm, Bouyon has become a driving force in Carnival culture across the Caribbean, making it the perfect sound to attract both regional and international audiences.

"This is about the people, the visitors, the locals, the culture. Carnival belongs to them, and we're building something they can feel and travel for." The response so far reflects that vision. Excitement is building rapidly, and tickets are already moving at a strong pace. Now in Phase 3, with 25% of tickets already sold, demand continues to rise – a clear indication of the growing pull of the event.

Building a standard: Experience, execution, and safety

With five years of successful productions, II Brothers Entertainment said it has developed a reputation for delivering high-quality, well-organized events that both locals and visitors can trust.

While financial challenges remain part of producing large-scale events, the team continues to prioritize execution and consistency. Behind the scenes, Kenrick Housen, also known as *Coco*, plays a key role in maintaining structure and flow as backstage manager.

"Our focus has always been on delivering a smooth, professional experience and that's what people have come to expect from us."

Safety also remains a core priority. In addition to ongoing collaboration with law enforcement, II Brothers continues to invest in additional private security, ensuring a safe and enjoyable environment for all attendees, especially international visitors experiencing Carnival.

Creating impact: Driving tourism through partnership

II Brothers Entertainment is taking an active role in promoting St. Maarten Carnival on a regional and international level, stepping in to build partnerships that directly support tourism growth.

This year, the team independently secured collaborations with major Caribbean influencers and media platforms, including Nicey Bwoss, Bahayogi, Julianspromos, Trini Jungle Juice, and Jeanette "Jlova" Mitchell from Tempo.

These partnerships are aimed at expanding Carnival's reach, showcasing Sint Maarten to wider audiences, and encouraging travel to the island during the season. Despite the absence of support from St. Maarten Tourism Department, II Brothers said it has continued to invest in promotion and visibility.

"We see the bigger picture. Carnival is one of the island's strongest tourism products, and we're ready to take the lead in building the partnerships needed to

grow it."

As part of that effort, the team also launched the Ultimate Carnival Experience Raffle, in collaboration with Ultimate Experience Productions and Julian's Promo. The winner, Jahyni Carty, will receive a full Carnival 2026 experience, including access to major events, participation in The Reunion Invasion J'ouvert, entry in the Grand Parade, and costume sponsored by Island Revelers.

In the spirit of Carnival 55 and the values that have shaped the brand since its inception, II Brothers Entertainment has partnered with SCDF and the SCDF Pageant Committee to support the ladies competing in this year's Queen Competition. Through this collaboration, the organization will assist contestants with professional lashes, nails, and makeup, ensuring they are confidently and beautifully presented as they take the stage.

"This anniversary is not only about celebrating how far we've come," said a representative of II Brothers Entertainment. "It's about using our platform to uplift others and invest directly into the cultural pillars that define us."

Enhancing the Carnival experience beyond the stage

II Brothers Entertainment said it continues to innovate within the Carnival Village. Last year, they introduced the first VIP second level dining experience that was approved by SCDF but stopped by VROMI/ the SOG Department. "We are again trying to make this happen for the public this year, but we have to wait on the approval of VROMI."

Additionally, Carnival 2026 will see the introduction of the first fully air-conditioned booth in the Village, setting a new standard for comfort and premium experience.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, II Brothers Entertainment has launched a limited-edition Carnival 55 Anniversary Package. Priced at US \$35, the package includes a branded shirt, rag, and cup

– available in ten vibrant colours. A portion of the proceeds from every package sold will go directly toward supporting the pageant initiative.

Today, April 10, is Carnival Opening Day and II Brothers Entertainment will host a special Happy Hour activation at its 16oz booths. Patrons wearing their anniversary package will enjoy an exclusive TWO for ONE beverage special, adding even more value to supporting the cause.

Expanding the experience: 5 years of growth

To mark their milestone, II Brothers is extending their presence across multiple Carnival touchpoints: The



Reunion Concert, The Reunion J'ouvert Invasion and 16OZ Village Experience. "We're not just creating one event; we're building an experience that follows you throughout Carnival."

The team said The Reunion, at its core, is about delivering an unforgettable moment – one that captures the true energy of St. Maarten while contributing to its growth as a top-tier Carnival destination. With a focus on high energy, strong cultural identity, and unexpected surprises, II Brothers is once again

aiming to set the standard. "We're coming with full energy, full vibes, and a clear goal – to deliver one of the best experiences of Carnival 2026."

With limited discounted tickets remaining and interest continuing to grow, the opportunity is now. Visitors, locals, and Carnival lovers alike are encouraged to secure their spot and be part of the movement.

"This is more than a show; it's an experience. Don't miss your chance to be part of it... be part of the starz."

Senior Calypso Finals set for April 21

The stage is set for one of the anticipated cultural showdowns of the season, as the Senior Calypso Finals return again this year to the Carnival calendar of events. Following a competitive elimination round that saw nearly 20 calypsonians battle for a place in the next stage, 10 finalists have officially secured their spots in the grand finals. These finalists will take centre stage in Carnival Village, each bringing powerful lyrics, social commentary, and musical creativity in pursuit of the coveted title.

On finals night, each of the 10 calypsonians will perform two songs, giving them the opportunity to showcase both lyrical depth and stage presence. The competition is expected to deliver a mix of humour, storytelling, and bold commentary – hallmarks of the calypso tradition. At the end of the night, one performer will be crowned Calypso Monarch, succeeding reigning champion Edsel "Yaadfowl" Eusebius, who captured the title in a standout debut performance last year.

mance last year.

The 2026 finalists represent a dynamic mix of seasoned performers and rising voices that are ready for the spotlight. With equal representation of male and female performers, this year's finals promise diversity in style, message, and performance energy.

The line-up includes the following:

- Erno York, Young Dow – I Wonder / Mind Ya Business
- Alberto Arrindell, Fish da Mega Boss – Lost in the Sauce
- Rumini Rogers, The Protégé – Pressure
- Isidore York, Mighty Dow – Liars and Fakes
- Pedro Jones, Dr. Jones – The Doctor's Office
- Jasmine Richardson, Lady Baker – Ubuntu
- Ashayna Nisbett, Ashayna – Guard the Village
- Evelyn Walters, Ebony Empress – Sharp Like a Razor
- Zahir Richardson, Empress Zee – We Rise
- Eunia Richardson, Empress Eunia – Charity Begins at Home

A Night of Culture and Commentary

Calypso remains one of the most powerful cultural expressions of Carnival, known for tackling social issues, politics, and everyday life through music and wit. Audiences can expect songs addressing current events, community concerns, and personal stories – delivered with the signature flair of the art form.

A recent elimination round already showcased the intensity of the competition, with performers delivering sharp messages and crowd-engaging performances that set the tone for the finals.

The Senior Calypso Finals is scheduled for Tuesday, April 21, as part of the ongoing Carnival celebrations. Admission to the event is US \$20.

From lyrical battles to crowd reactions, the finals promise an electrifying night where music meets message and where one voice will rise above the rest to claim the Calypso Monarch crown.

KONCERT X RETURNS BIGGER WITH HIGH-ENERGY LINE-UP, INTERNATIONAL ACTS

As Carnival season builds momentum, one event continues to carve out its own space on the calendar, offering a distinct musical experience that blends performance, culture and nonstop energy: Koncert X, led by St Maarten singer and performer King James (Kelvin James), is returning this year on Thursday, April 23, with an expanded vision, promising patrons an unforgettable night rooted in Caribbean sound and live entertainment.

Patrons can expect a high energy, non-stop music experience. Koncert X is built around one backing band, delivering a high-quality show with multiple artistes flowing one after the other. It's not your typical stop and go event – it's a continuous musical journey with a real concert feel."

That continuous flow remains one of the defining features of Koncert X, setting it apart from traditional Carnival events. Instead of breaks between performances, the show is designed to keep audiences engaged from start to finish, creating an immersive atmosphere where music takes centre stage.

Building on the success of its previous editions, this year's show introduces new elements aimed at elevating the overall experience while maintaining its core identity.

"This year, we've elevated the experience by introducing a few international acts alongside our SXM talent. The first two years focused heavily on showcasing SXM artistes, which remains important, but this year we're expanding the reach and adding fresh elements to keep the show dynamic and exciting."

The addition of international



performers signals a new phase for Koncert X – one that broadens its appeal while still prioritizing local talent. That balance between growth and authenticity remains central to the event's mission.

Asked what inspired him to continue hosting Koncert X as part of the Carnival line-up, King James said the response from the first two editions made it clear that there is a demand for a show like this. "Koncert X fills a unique space during Carnival by offering a structured, live performance event that highlights SXM artistry. It's something I'm passionate about, and I see it as a platform to grow both the culture and the performers."

At its heart, Koncert X serves as a platform, not only for entertainment, but for artistic development and exposure. It provides local performers with an opportunity to share the stage in a setting that emphasizes professionalism and live musical excellence.



"We have a strong line-up of both local and regional artistes. While I prefer to keep a few surprises for the night itself, patrons can expect a mix of familiar names and exciting guest appearances that will add to the overall experience."

While details of the full line-up remain partially under wraps, the promise of surprise appearances adds an extra layer of anticipation for those planning to attend.

Musically, the event stays true to its Caribbean roots, delivering a vibrant mix designed to resonate with a wide audience. "The core is Caribbean, which means it's a blend of Caribbean sounds. The goal is to create a vibrant, high energy vibe that keeps the audience engaged from start to finish."

This focus on Caribbean music underscores the cultural significance of Koncert X within the broader Carnival landscape.

Asked how important is Koncert X in showcasing local and regional talent during Carnival, King James said: "It's extremely important. Koncert X was built as a platform for SXM artistes to perform and get that opportunity to showcase their talent on the big stage, which is not always readily available. It also allows SXM talent to elevate their performance level while also sharing the stage with regional acts, creating growth and exposure opportunities."

However, bringing an event of this scale to life is not without its challenges. From funding to

logistics, organizing Koncert X requires careful coordination and persistence. "Like any major event, financial sponsorship, as well as logistics, is always a challenge, especially with coordinating international travel, scheduling rehearsals, and managing production. Additionally, ensuring the show continues to grow while maintaining quality requires careful planning and investment."

Despite these challenges, the vision for Koncert X remains clear, with a strong focus on creating an engaging and inclusive atmosphere for all attendees. "We're aiming for a vibrant, energetic crowd that appreciates good music and good performances. The atmosphere we're creating is one of unity, excitement, and pure enjoyment – a true SXM Carnival experience."

Public response so far suggests that the event is continuing to build momentum and recognition within the Carnival line-up. "The response thus far has been very encouraging. There's growing awareness around the brand, and people are starting to recognize Koncert X as a must-attend event during SXM Carnival."

As part of the wider festivities, Koncert X contributes a unique dimension to the Carnival experience, offering something different from the usual party format.

"Koncert X adds variety to the Carnival line-up. It offers something different from the typical fete by focusing on SXM artistes

showcasing the cultural and entertainment value of the season."

Lessons learned from previous editions have also played a key role in refining this year's production. "I've learned the importance of pacing, preparation, and audience engagement. This year, we've improved on the overall show flow to ensure a smoother and more impactful experience."

New additions to the show promise to enhance both the visual and musical elements of the event.

Asked whether there were any new elements that patrons can look forward to, he said: "Yes, definitely – from improved stage production to surprise moments, we've added elements that will enhance the overall experience and keep the audience fully engaged."

While entertainment is a major focus, maintaining cultural authenticity remains a guiding principle. Expressing how he balances entertainment with cultural celebration during Carnival events like this, he responded: "By staying true to the music and the artistes. The foundation of Koncert X is Caribbean culture, and while we aim to entertain, we also ensure that the authenticity of the music and performance remains at the forefront."

Ultimately, the goal is for attendees to leave with a deeper appreciation for the talent and culture that define the region. "I want people to leave feeling proud of the talent we have here in SXM as well as the region; also be excited about where our music and culture are going. It's about celebrating who we are through music."

He sees Koncert X becoming a permanent staple on the Carnival calendar in the years to come. "That is definitely the vision. We are building Koncert X to become a signature event that people look forward to every year."

With its focus on continuous music, cultural pride and evolving production, Koncert X is positioning itself as a standout experience within Carnival – one that celebrates both the sound and spirit of St. Maarten.

Bacchanal Sunday marks 10 years with 'Wild Whine Waist' theme, star-studded line-up

As one of the most anticipated events on the St. Maarten Carnival calendar, Bacchanal Sunday is set to return bigger, bolder, and hotter than ever as it celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

Organising team member Melisa Boasman says the team is once again raising the bar, promising an unforgettable experience packed with energy, music, and surprises.

"At Bacchanal Sunday, we believe there's truly a science to the madness. As a team, we pay close attention to people's behaviours, trends, and the ever-evolving social scene so we can understand exactly what makes an experience unforgettable. It's never an easy task, but we're humbled and proud to consistently deliver the kind of energy, excitement, and quality that our patrons look forward to year after year," Boasman explained.

That commitment to innovation is at the heart of this year's event, which introduces a brand-new concept designed to elevate the experience for revellers. "This year, we're raising the bar with the Bacchanal Sunday Unique Experience. For 2026, we're bringing a bold and thrilling Wild Whine Waist theme to life, so get ready to show up in full Cowboy's style! It's going to be a one-of-a-kind Carnival experience with a fresh vibe that sets this year apart from anything we've done before," she said.

Set for May 3, this milestone edition carries added significance for both or-

ganisers and patrons alike. "This year is extra special as we celebrate our 10th anniversary, and we're coming bigger, bolder, and hotter than ever. Patrons can expect high-energy performances, unforgettable surprises, nonstop vibes, and the kind of moments that will have everyone talking long after the event is over," Boasman added.

A major highlight of Bacchanal Sunday continues to be its dynamic musical line-up, which this year features an impressive mix of regional and international talent alongside local favourites. "We've put together a powerhouse line-up designed to keep the energy sky-high from beginning to end," she said.

The artistes set to take the stage include soca icon Machel Montano, along with M.O.B. (Masters of Bouyon) bringing together Asa Bantan and TK International "on stage together, never seen before." The line-up also features Lady Lava, Elephant Man, Big Shaw, King James, Muddy, and Lil Kerry, among others.

On the DJ side, patrons can expect nonstop energy from a strong roster including DJ Tero, Int'l Stephen, DJ Big Boss, DJ King Kembe, DJ Maestro, DJ Drino, and DJ Kenz.

"With a line-up this dynamic, we're expecting pure fire from start to finish. Our goal is to create an electrifying musical journey that keeps the crowd moving, singing, and fully immersed in the Bacchanal Sunday experience," Boasman said.

While the line-up alone promises an unforgettable show, organisers are also hinting at additional surprises. "Let's just say... there are definitely a few surprises in store. But to find out what they are, you'll have to be there and experience it for yourself!" she teased.

Bacchanal Sunday has built a reputation over the years as more than just another Carnival event, and Boasman believes that is what continues to draw large crowds year after year. "Bacchanal Sunday has become one of the most highly anticipated events of the St. Maarten Carnival season, and for good reason. We believe it offers the perfect fusion of excitement, energy, and pure celebration. It's more than just an event it's an unforgettable, in-the-moment experience that captures pure bliss in a way you simply can't find anywhere else," she said.

Central to that experience is the atmosphere organisers aim to create. "We're aiming to create that magical 'in the moment' feeling – the kind of energy that can only happen when thousands of people are vibing together as one. It's about bringing together people from different islands, nations, and cultures in harmony, all united by one thing Caribbean people hold close to the heart – music. That connection, that feeling, that shared joy – that's the Bacchanal Sunday experience," Boasman explained.

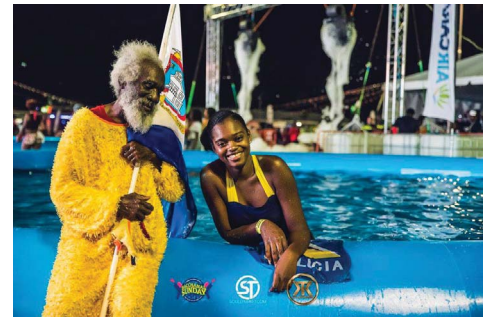
Over the past decade, Bacchanal Sunday has grown from a local concept into a widely recognized cultural event with an expanding in-

ternational reach. "Watching Bacchanal Sunday grow from just an idea into something far bigger than the Kalaboom team ever imagined has been truly incredible. What started in St. Maarten has grown into a movement that keeps expanding year after year. To now see the buzz reaching places like France, Holland and beyond, is a major accomplishment for our team. It shows that Bacchanal Sunday is no longer just an event, but a cultural experience with a growing international impact, and the future is only getting bigger," she said.

The event has also played a significant role in promoting local talent by providing a major platform for artistes to perform.

"Bacchanal Sunday has always been a major platform for showcasing local talent and giving artists the opportunity to shine on a massive stage. Over the years, talents such as Lyte, King James, Tolly Boys, Red Eye Crew, King Vers, and many more have all had their moment in the spotlight," Boasman noted.

She highlighted the impact the event can have on emerging artists, adding, "One of our young local artists, BRG Hollywood, who made his career debut on the Bacchanal Sunday stage. After that performance, everyone wanted to book him. That is exactly the kind of impact this platform can have. Local artists know that once they put in the work, Bacchanal Sunday is ready to give them the opportunity to bless the



stage. Supporting and elevating home-grown talent remains one of the things that make this event so special."

Behind the scenes, significant effort goes into ensuring the event runs smoothly and safely. "Events of this scale require detailed planning, strong coordination, and strategic logistics every step of the way, from behind the scenes right up to centre stage. We're incredibly grateful to our dedicated team members and trusted vendors who have grown with us over the years and continue to play a vital role in making sure Bacchanal Sunday remains a safe, smooth, and well-organized experience for everyone attending," she said.

For those planning to attend, Boasman offered a simple but important piece of advice. "Yes, come early and be on time! Get your full ticket's worth, because you do not want to miss a single moment of the surprises, performances, and entertainment we have lined up. From the very first vibe to the final burst of energy, Bacchanal Sunday is an experience

you'll want to enjoy from start to finish."

And for anyone still wondering what to expect, she made it clear in no uncertain terms: "This is not a concert... IT'S A FETE!"

Boasman also extended gratitude to the event's partners, noting their critical role in bringing Bacchanal Sunday to life: CLT, Hennessy, Air Caraïbes, Divico, TelEm, and KBand. Your support helps make Bacchanal Sunday possible."

Tickets are available at Kalaboom HQ, Tech Hub, Picture This Studio, SXM Promotionz, Digicel Stores, Levi's Boutique, and online at Inthefete.com. "We truly couldn't do it without the continued love and support of our partners, patrons, and community," Boasman said.

As Bacchanal Sunday marks a decade of music, culture, and celebration, organisers are confident this year's edition will deliver an experience that lives up to its reputation and raises it even higher.



ST. MAARTEN SOCA TO THE WORLD

SOCA RUMBLE RETURNS WITH FRESH FORMAT, FOCUS ON NEW TALENT, PUBLIC VOTING

After a six-year hiatus, Soca Rumble is making a highly anticipated return for Carnival 2026, with organisers aiming to restore an important cultural platform while reigniting excitement around St. Maarten's soca music and emerging talent.

"The decision to bring Soca Rumble back was really driven by culture, talent development, and demand," organisers stated, reflecting on the event's impact between 2015 and 2019. During that period, Soca Rumble established itself as one of the island's most dynamic Carnival events, helping artistes build recognisable identities and produce Carnival hits.

"Its return for Carnival 2026 is about restoring that platform, reigniting public excitement, and once again placing local soca at the centre of the Carnival experience."

The event is scheduled for April 28, as part of the official Carnival calendar, and will feature its signature Groovy Soca

and Power Soca categories. However, this year's edition is being framed as a special reintroduction, rather than a full competition.

"For 2026, it is important to clarify that this is not a full-fledged competition year, but rather a one-time special edition designed to bring Soca Rumble back to life and reconnect the public with the music, the energy, and the artistes."

In a significant shift, winners will not be determined by judges but entirely by the audience through SMS voting, a move aimed at ensuring transparency and public engagement. "Transparency this year comes from that simplicity – what the public feels, the public decides."

Organisers noted that fairness will be maintained by giving all artistes equal opportunity to perform, and ensuring the voting process is clearly communicated and properly managed.

This year's line-up will feature eight artistes – Brando, Acha, Empress Eunia, Angie, Jabz, Schiff, Nolrez and Zone – representing a

new and emerging wave of local soca talent. All entries will be Groovy Soca tracks, with a focus on melody, storytelling and connection with the crowd. Two performers will earn their "stripe" based on audience response, creating a pathway into a more structured and competitive format set to return in 2027.

As part of the relaunch, organisers stress a stronger focus on quality and preparation, requiring all submissions to be fully mixed and mastered and created specifically for the 2026 Carnival season. This reflects a broader shift towards professionalism and long-term development within the event.

"The strongest approach is to pair that rule with a formal vetting stage: Submission review, technical checks, confirmation of originality, and prompt feedback where a track does not meet the required standard."

Soca Rumble's past success, organisers said, was rooted in its authenticity, competitiveness and production quality. "It was

unapologetically local, it was competitive, and it had production value," they noted, recalling that thousands of fans attended previous finals. "People felt ownership of it; it was our music, our artistes, our sound."

The 2026 edition also introduces structural changes, including governance under a non-profit model, designed to strengthen transparency and avoid concerns related to private ownership or conflicts of interest. This shift positions the event more firmly within the cultural domain while supporting its long-term sustainability.

Cultural integrity remains central to the relaunch. "This edition is about nostalgia, revival, and celebrating St. Maarten soca, not over-regulating the experience. It's about bringing back that authentic Carnival vibe that people remember and love."

Beyond entertainment, Soca Rumble continues to play a significant role in the island's creative economy. The event supports a wide network of creatives,

including musicians, dancers, costume designers and other industry professionals, while also driving attendance and strengthening Carnival programming.

"Soca Rumble is more than a competition, it is a cultural export platform," organisers said, noting that past winners have gone on to perform internationally. The platform not only elevates local talent but also helps position St. Maarten's sound on regional and global stages.

Artistes who perform well can expect increased visibility, credibility and opportunities, including bookings, media exposure and stronger branding within the Carnival scene. Organisers say that success in Soca Rumble has historically contributed to the rise of local musical icons.

The event will also benefit from promotional build-up activities, including public engagement and performances leading up to the finals, reinforcing that Soca Rumble is more than a single-night event. It is designed as a platform for growth and professional

development.

Organisers envision Soca Rumble evolving into a broader cultural development engine, supporting artistes in song-writing, production, stage performance and branding, while expanding its reach through digital platforms. "If the goal is truly 'St. Maarten Soca to the World,' then digital reach has to be part of the future."

The 2026 edition, however, remains focused on reconnection and momentum.

"This 2026 edition is a reintroduction and relaunch, a way to reignite interest and rebuild momentum."

With its return during Carnival's 55th anniversary season, Soca Rumble is expected to bridge generations, honouring the legacy of the past, while creating space for the next wave of soca talent to emerge and define the future of the island's music.

The Season of Rhythm, Revelry, and Road Energy!

The festive spirit of St. Maarten Carnival returns in full force for its 55th edition, bringing weeks of electrifying music, colourful parades, and jump-ups! These rolling street parties, which capture the

true community heartbeat of Carnival, are some of most anticipated highlights of the Carnival Season, as they are open to the public and anyone can join in and walk along.

The festivities kick off with the Opening Jump Up on April 10 at 8:00pm at Milton Peters College, setting the tone for the season. Revellers will flood the streets in a sea of colour, dancing behind pulsating sound trucks, as soca and calypso rhythms echo through the island. This opening event sends out the official signal that Carnival has begun.

In the early hours of April 27 at 4:00am, the energy rises again for the legendary Jouvett Morning Jump Up throughout Philipsburg, starting at Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village. This event is known for its

raw, unfiltered excitement as participants take to the road before sunrise, covered in paint, powder, and pure joy. It's a celebration of freedom, culture, and community that continues to define Caribbean Carnival traditions.

As the season winds down, one final explosion of energy awaits – the Closing / Last Lap Jump Up on May 5. Starting at 8:00pm at Raoul Illidge Sports Complex and ending at Festival Village, the closing Jump Up gives revellers one last chance to hit the road. This grand finale is both a celebration and a farewell filled with music, dancing, and a bittersweet acknowledgment that another incredible Carnival is coming to an end.



From the first beat to the last lap, St. Maarten Carnival 55 promises a dynamic showcase of culture, unity, and non-stop vibes. It truly doesn't matter if you're a first-time visitor or a seasoned masquerader, these Jump Ups are really the ultimate way to experience the soul of the island. Mark your calendar to kick off the Opening Jump Up, or wake up early for Jouvett, or embrace the finale of the season in the Last Lap or perhaps participate in all three events!



KLIMAXX KARNIVAL TO BRING “REIGN OF THE LEGACY” TO CARNIVAL 55

~ Introduces youth section – Klimaxx Kidz ~

Driven by passion, resilience, and a deep love for Carnival, Klimaxx Karnival is preparing to take to the road for St. Maarten's 55th Carnival with a bold and meaningful presentation under the theme "Reign of the Legacy."

For troupe leader Learie Hall, this year represents growth, determination, and a commitment to building something lasting despite the challenges.

Reflecting on last year, Hall explained that valuable lessons shaped this year's approach. "Last year really taught me the importance of structure, timing, and planning ahead. We had a great vibe, but this year I made sure everything is more organized from early – from production straight down to communication. I also learned that relying heavily on sponsorship is a risk, because this year especially, it has been very difficult, so we had to build more from within."

Leading a mas troupe in St. Maarten has not been without its difficulties, but Hall remains motivated by his passion for the culture. "It's been a journey of passion and resilience. Leading a troupe here is not easy, especially with limited resources, but the love for Carnival and culture keeps me going. At the end of the day, seeing people enjoy what you create makes it all worth it."

This year's theme – "Reign of the Legacy" – carries a strong message rooted in identity and impact. "It's about power, culture, and leaving a lasting mark. We're representing different parts of the world while still keeping that Caribbean identity strong." That vision comes to life through three main sections on the road, including a China-inspired section featuring bold reds and golds with structured designs representing strength and tradition, as well as a Caribbean-inspired section filled with

vibrant tropical colours, feathers, and pure island energy.

The troupe will also feature Exotique Vortex from the French side, bringing its own unique style and flavour to the road. Hall noted that the decision to focus on fewer sections was intentional. "We chose to focus on quality over quantity, especially with the challenges we've been facing this year."

One of the most exciting additions this year is the introduction of Klimaxx Kidz – a children's troupe designed to reconnect youth with culture and Carnival. "This year, we introduced Klimaxx Kidz, our children's troupe, which we believe has been missing from Carnival for some time." The children's theme, "Wonders of St. Maarten," focuses on cultural roots, identity, and the island's beauty, with sections highlighting traditions, everyday island life, and the spirit of St. Maarten. "It's about teaching the youth where we come from while keeping it fun and colourful."

Costumes will once again play a major role in the troupe's presentation, with bold and eye-catching designs expected on the road. "The costumes are bold, vibrant, and full of energy. We're using rich colours, feathers, beads, and gemstones to really stand out on the road."

Hall also revealed that his personal costume will be a standout piece. "My costume will be one of the standout pieces very detailed, strong presence, with a heavy back piece and a lot of statement elements. It's designed to represent leadership and fully embody the theme 'Reign of the Legacy.'"

The troupe is targeting approximately 100 revellers this year, all of whom can expect a high-energy experience from start to finish. With a line-up that includes DJ Darrian, DJ Lil R, DJ C4, and MC Chewawah, the music will keep the road alive. "Pure energy – soca, bouyon, and some all types – the kind of music that keeps you moving nonstop and creates that real Carnival feeling."

Despite the excitement, challenges remain, particularly in securing sponsorship.

"The biggest challenge has been sponsorship. It has been extremely difficult this year securing the level of support needed – which impacts production and execution." Rising costs have also added pressure. "Material costs, production, and logistics are all more expensive, and without strong sponsorship, it makes everything more difficult." Still, the troupe continues to push forward, relying on creativity and determination to bring their vision to life.



Hall said that the message behind this year's presentation goes beyond the costumes and music. "We want to portray strength, culture, and resilience. Despite the challenges, especially financially this year, we are still coming out strong. It's about legacy, pride, and celebrating who we are." He also highlighted what sets Klimaxx apart. "Klimaxx is about bold presentation and authenticity. We don't just put costumes on the road, we create an experience."

Interest in the troupe has remained steady, even as economic factors influence

decisions.

"Interest has been steady. People love the concepts and designs, but economic factors are definitely affecting decisions. Still, we continue to push and build momentum." Looking ahead, Hall has a clear vision for the future. "The goal is to grow Klimaxx into one of the leading troupes, not just in St. Maarten but across the region. Building a brand that represents quality, culture, and consistency."

He also stressed the importance of greater support for mas troupes. "We need more corporate sponsorship and community support. Carnival plays a major role in culture and tourism, and mas troupes are a big part of that. More investment would allow us to elevate the overall experience."

Despite everything, his commitment remains firm. "Despite the challenges, we remain committed to delivering a quality experience on the road. Klimaxx Karnival is built on passion, and we will continue to represent St. Maarten with pride and purpose."

The troupe also extended thanks to its sponsors Flow, Essence and Mind, Sixt Car Rental, Vectors Cosmetics, and GEBE for their support.



Road March Competition brings energy, youth, vibes to carnival stage

The pulsating rhythm of Carnival finds one of its most electrifying expressions in the fourth annual Calypso Barbara Junior Calypso and Road March Competition and Dow's Musical Foundation's (DMF) Junior Steel Band competition set for April 11.

This year's event promises to be especially exciting, as a new generation of performers step forward to deliver the kind of "jump-up" songs that define the Carnival experience.

Isidore "The Mighty Dow" York offers insight into the Road March aspect of the competition.

"The Road March competition is judged on stage, where contestants perform their 'jump-up' songs. Traditionally, Road March winners were determined by how often a song was played on the road, but in St. Maarten, it is now judged live."

York said this shift brings a dynamic immediacy to

the competition, placing the spotlight squarely on performance and audience engagement in real time.

Eight young contestants will take part in this year's Road March category, each bringing their own style and energy. The line-up includes DreToofire, Bony Gyal, Island Gyal, Princess Peterson, Mr. Bacchanal, Empress Jeweltz, Mr. Fantastic, and Queen A, with ages ranging from 12 to 16 years old. While there are no competing bands, each artiste will be backed by a live band and enhanced by dancers and stage performances, creating a full, immersive show.

What sets Road March apart is its focus on vibe – the intangible quality that makes a song irresistible on the road. York explains, "Judges evaluate which song has the best vibe for the road, looking at energy, melody, chorus, and overall performance. The key is how well the performer can move the crowd and create a song people would enjoy jamming to during Carnival." It is this connection between artiste

and audience that ultimately determines who claims the coveted title.

Participation in the program has seen a notable boost this year, signalling growing interest among young performers.

"Participation has increased significantly this year, with over 30 students initially involved in training. Organizers expect continued growth and may introduce official eliminations in the future as interest in the program expands." This surge in involvement points to a thriving pipeline of talent, eager to contribute to the island's musical landscape.

Winning the Road March title carries significant weight. As York puts it, "The Road March title is a prestigious honour, as it recognizes the most impactful Carnival song. While traditionally it meant being the most played on the road, today it still gives artistes recognition, exposure, and a strong reputation within the music scene." For young artistes, it is both an achievement

and a stepping stone toward greater opportunities.

The event plays an important role in strengthening the local music industry. "The competition helps grow the local music industry by encouraging new talent, creating original music, and giving artistes exposure, while highlighting the need for greater support and year-round promotion of local music." In this way, Road March is not just a highlight of Carnival, but also a catalyst for artistic development.

Organizing such an event, however, comes with its challenges. York candidly shares, "One of the main challenges this year was securing financial support, along with the time and effort required to train and prepare young, mostly beginner performers for the competition." Despite these hurdles, the commitment to nurturing talent remains unwavering.

Looking ahead, there is a clear vision for growth and improvement. "There are ongoing plans to improve

the competition, with a strong focus on building community support, encouraging consistent participation, and fostering a greater appreciation for preserving and growing the culture among youth." These efforts aim to ensure that Road March continues to evolve while staying rooted in tradition.

At its core, the competition is about more than just music; it is about cultural preservation and empowerment. The competition supports local artistes by providing a platform to showcase their talent, while also preserving and continuing the island's cultural traditions. This dual purpose makes it a vital part of the Carnival experience.

The community also plays a crucial role in shaping the event's atmosphere and outcome. "The community plays a key role by attending the event, supporting the contestants, and creating an energetic atmosphere that motivates and inspires the performers." That shared energy is what transforms a performance into a memo-

orable Carnival moment.

The event will be held on April 11 at the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village. Gates open at 5:30pm, with the show starting at 6:00pm, featuring the Steelpan Showdown, followed by the Calypso and Road March competitions. It promises to be an evening packed with rhythm, talent, and celebration.

The stakes are high, with the Road March winner taking home US \$1,000, along with the recognition that comes with claiming one of Carnival's most celebrated titles.

As the music builds and the crowd responds, the Road March competition will once again prove why it remains a cornerstone of Carnival. With young performers bringing fresh energy and creativity to the stage, this year's event is set to deliver unforgettable moments and reaffirm the power of music to unite, inspire, and keep the spirit of Carnival alive.

Unforgettable Big Band Culture event to celebrate the heartbeat of Carnival

As the 55th Carnival celebrations get underway, one event is placing a powerful spotlight on a sound that has defined the island for generations: the "Unforgettable Big Band Culture" event is not just another addition to the calendar, but a deliberate tribute to the musical foundation of Carnival, reminding the public of the enduring role live bands have played in shaping the island's cultural identity.

According to St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) representative Michael Granger, the inspiration behind the event is deeply rooted in tradition and a desire to preserve what makes St. Maarten's Carnival unique. "Big bands are a staple of our Carnival going back decades. We wanted to remind folks that whether it is on the stage or the road, we love our big bands and will do our utmost to ensure that they always play a significant role in Carnival."

This year's edition stands out for its singular focus. Unlike other events that may blend DJs and various entertainment formats, this showcase is dedicated entirely to live band performances. "The obvious aspect is: it is only bands on stage. There will also be a focus on newly established bands, which might not be fully ready for the road this Carnival, but deserve some shine on the stage." That intentional decision creates space not only for seasoned musicians but also for emerging talent eager to make their mark.

The event will feature strictly local talent, reinforcing its role as a cultural preservation platform. "Strictly 100% local," Granger said, underscoring the importance of supporting home-grown musicians and giving them a prominent stage during such a milestone celebration.

Beyond entertainment, the event carries a deeper mission tied to heritage and inspiration. "Most of our solo artistes began their careers

as part of a band. We preserve our music and heritage through them. As such, we have to support their beginnings and their platforms (the bands) – which are springboards to so much more." This connection between past and present is central to the event's purpose, creating a bridge for younger generations to understand and appreciate the roots of the music they enjoy today.

Granger explained that witnessing live performances can have a lasting impact on aspiring musicians. "When upcoming young musicians see where some of their favourite artistes began, this serves as an inspiration for them to stay consistent in their art form. And this by extension benefits our culture as they become guardians of same." It is this cycle of inspiration and continuity that SCDF hopes to strengthen through the event.

The decision to include the Unforgettable Big Band Culture event in the 55th anni-

versary line-up also responds to shifting trends within the Carnival landscape. "Modern Carnival festivities are seeing the strong growth of DJs. Bands are facing much higher costs than normal and this is dissuading many from participating. It was important for us to remind everyone that bands are a part of who we are. It is an issue that requires a larger discussion in the months following Carnival." The event therefore serves as both a celebration and a call to action for greater support of live music.

Live bands, Granger noted, are essential to maintaining the authenticity of St. Maarten's Carnival sound. "St. Maarten Carnival has a particular sound. Like any other Caribbean island, our Carnival sound is totally different. Grenada has the 'jan' sounds, Trinidad has that power soca sound, St. Maarten has what we call a 'jam band' sound. Very difficult to describe in writing, but in tone and tempo and style, it's unique, especially to the North-Eastern Carib-

bean. The USVI has a similar sound. Our bands must always do their best to maintain and elevate that sound."

The event is also designed to bring together a diverse audience, recognising that both young and older generations play a role in sustaining big band culture. "We hope to attract a cross section of youth and adults, as both are significant to big band culture. The youth have to take up interest in music, and the adults have to ensure that they facilitate the youth development in the art form. Seeing it live on stage is important to that process."

Public response so far has been encouraging, signalling strong anticipation ahead of the event. "Excellent, we hope to see it translated in numbers in the Village," Granger shared, expressing optimism that the enthusiasm will carry through to attendance.

Behind the scenes, efforts are being made to ensure a seamless production. "Our

sound team, Sound 2000, always ensures the production is smooth – of that we have no doubt. That is never a concern, and the public can expect the same." With experienced professionals handling the technical aspects, patrons can expect a polished and high-quality experience.

Ultimately, the message to the public is clear and heartfelt: "This is your opportunity to come out and show support for local bands – something the public has suggested we do more of. We listened and will present on stage a few terrific bands that are looking forward to your support."

In a Carnival season filled with excitement, the Unforgettable Big Band Culture event stands as a powerful reminder that the roots of the festival are just as important as its evolution, and the sound of live bands continues to define the spirit of St. Maarten.



THREE QUEENS TO BE CROWNED At Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village

The spotlight is set. The stage is calling. This Carnival season in St. Maarten, there will be three spectacular nights of beauty, culture, and competition – ready to captivate audiences like never before. From rising stars to seasoned ambassadors of Caribbean elegance, the Teen Pageant, Senior Pageant, and Caribbean Queen Pageant are more than pretty shows, they are defining moments combining beauty, culture, con-

fidence and competition.

Caribbean Queen Pageant

The crown jewel of the series is hosted on Wednesday, April 15. This electrifying night brings together queens from across the Caribbean, all competing for regional supremacy in a celebration of unity, culture, and beauty. Expect stunning costumes, powerful interviews, and spectacular performances. There will be live music and dancing as well as

food and drinks available for purchase. With contestants representing multiple islands and competing for major titles and prizes, this is a must-see international showcase of Caribbean pride.

Teen Carnival Queen Pageant

On Monday, April 20, watch the next generation of queens take centre stage. These young, vibrant contestants bring energy, creativity, and fearless ambition as they compete in

talent, speech, and dazzling presentations. Competing for the teen crown are contestants Z'naiyah George, D'angelique Harregan, Chrisincia Mathew, Dwanijsa Reid and Aalyah Ash, among others. This is where future leaders are born and where the crowd discovers new favourites.

Senior Carnival Queen Pageant

Also on April 20, elegance meets excellence in one of Carnival's most presti-

gious titles. Contestants will command the stage with poise, intelligence, and powerful performances as they compete for the crown and the honour of representing Sint Maarten on a regional level. Competing for the senior crown are contestants Breyenne Brown, Taylor Brown and Leann Richardson, among others. This pageant is not just a competition – it's a gateway to international representation, with winners going on to compete

across the Caribbean.

Seats fill quickly every year, and with three major pageants back-to-back, demand is even higher. Be ready to witness cherished moments, powerful performances, and the crowning of queens who will represent the spirit of St. Maarten. So, make your plans to arrive a bit early to secure your tickets and be part of the magic!

Visit sxmcar Carnival.life for more information.

St. Maarten 2026 Carnival Schedule

Pre-Events / March 14th - March 29th, 2026

- Saturday, March 14 ▶ Republic Bank Carnival 55 Kick-Off Event
- Friday, March 20 ▶ Causeway Jump-Up
- Saturday, March 21 ▶ Nagico Senior Calypso Eliminations
- Friday, March 27 ▶ Unity Jump Up
- Saturday, March 28 (3PM) ▶ Junior Carnival Queen Pageant
- Saturday, March 28 ▶ Big Bad XP Back Yard Jam

Main-Events / April 10th - May 5th, 2026

- Friday, April 10 ▶ Opening of Carnival 2026 / Opening Jump-Up
- Saturday, April 11 ▶ Calypso Barbara Junior Calypso & Roadmarch Competition
- Sunday, April 12 ▶ Carnival Family Fun Day
- Monday, April 13 ▶ Culture Night - One Nation, Many Cultures
- Tuesday, April 14 ▶ "Unforgettable" - Big Band Culture
- Wednesday, April 15 ▶ St. Maarten Carnival Caribbean Queen Pageant
- Thursday, April 16 ▶ The Village Chill
- Friday, April 17 ▶ King Beau Beau & Friends In Concert "From Then to Now"
- Saturday, April 18 ▶ Band Clash & Road March Competition
- Sunday, April 19 ▶ Junior Carnival Parade
- Monday, April 20 ▶ Teen & Senior Carnival Queen Pageants
- Tuesday, April 21 ▶ Nagico Senior Calypso Finals
- Wednesday, April 22 ▶ Soulful Company - Our Superstars
- Thursday, April 23 ▶ Koncert X
- Friday, April 24 ▶ One Love Reggae Concert
- Saturday, April 25 ▶ II Brothers Entertainment Concert
- Sunday, April 26 ▶ Caribbean Flag Fest
- Monday, April 27 (4am) ▶ Jouvert Mornin' Jump-Up
- Monday, April 27 (8pm) ▶ Youth Extravaganza
- Tuesday, April 28 ▶ Socca Rumble
- Wednesday, April 29 ▶ Noche Latina
- Thursday, April 30 ▶ Grand Carnival Parade
- Friday, May 1 (7pm) ▶ Labour Day Lighted Parade
- Saturday, May 2 ▶ Night of the Hit Makers
- Sunday, May 3 ▶ Bacchanal Sunday
- Monday, May 4 ▶ Carnival 55: The DJ Takeover Concert
- Tuesday, May 5 ▶ Closing / Last Lap Jump Up

55 St. Maarten Carnival

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